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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 361. FOR WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 30TH, 1895. [ONE PENNY.

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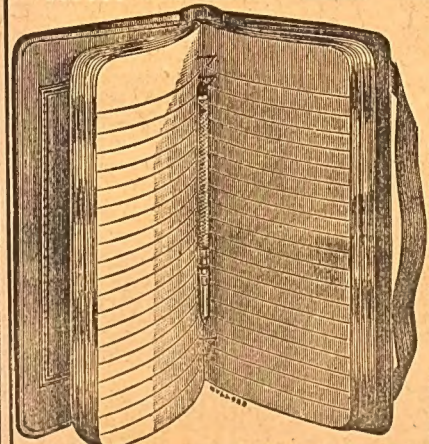

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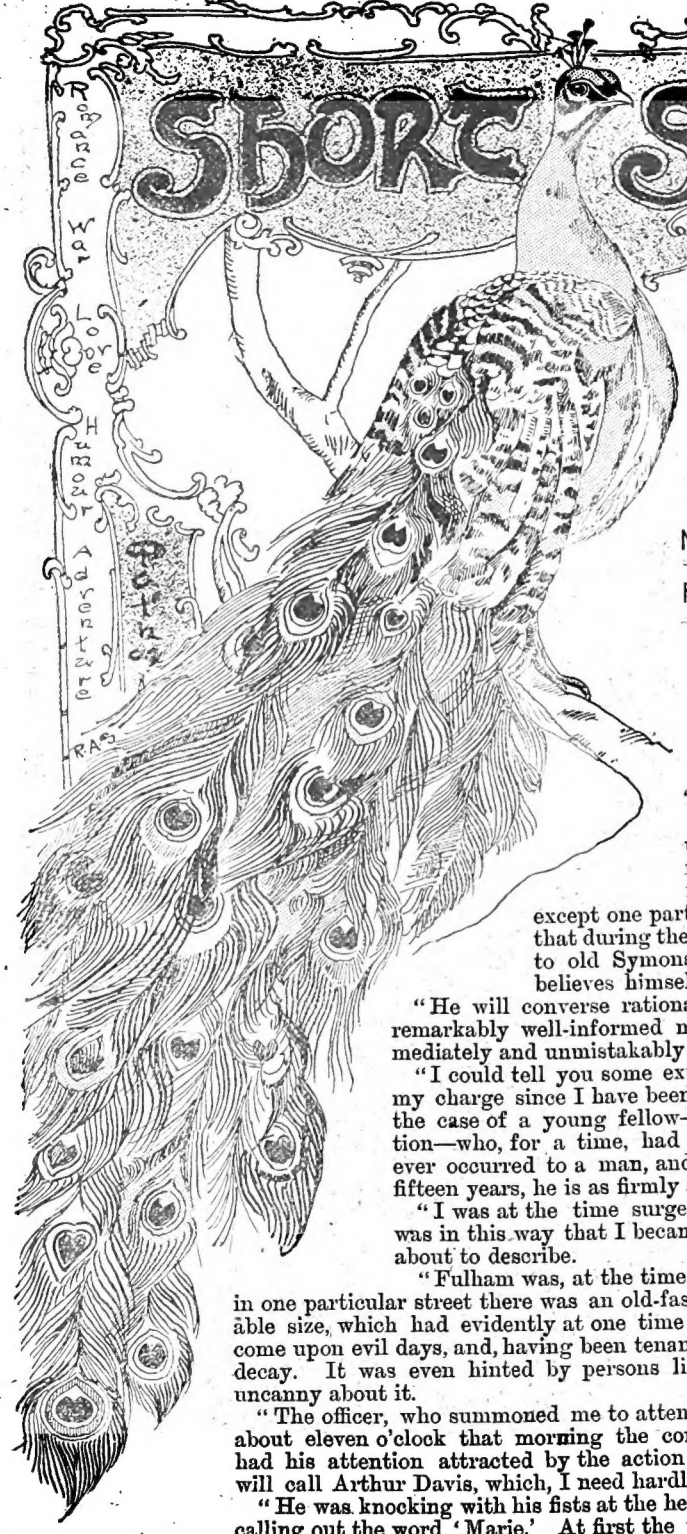

No. 361. [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending November 30th, 1895.

A Mysterious - - - - Disappearance.

"STRANGE delusions, you say. Yes, as is often the case, many of the patients under my charge"—the speaker was an old friend of mine, and the principal medical officer in a large asylum—"are absolutely sane on all except one particular subject. You yourself must have noticed that during the conversazione this evening, for I saw you talking to old Symons, who is as sane as you or I, except that he believes himself the rightful heir to the throne of England.

"He will converse rationally on any subject under the sun, and he's a remarkably well-informed man, but once mention Royalty, and he is immediately and unmistakably insane.

"I could tell you some extraordinary stories of patients I have had under my charge since I have been here, but none probably so strange as that of the case of a young fellow—now an eminent scientist of very high reputation—who, for a time, had one of the most extraordinary delusions which ever occurred to a man, and what is more, even now, after a lapse of over fifteen years, he is as firmly as ever convinced of its absolute reality.

"I was at the time surgeon to the police in the Fulham Division, and it was in this way that I became acquainted, professionally, with the case I am about to describe.

"Fulham was, at the time, much less thickly populated than it is now, and in one particular street there was an old-fashioned, but sadly dilapidated, house of considerable size, which had evidently at one time been a residence of much importance; but it had come upon evil days, and, having been tenantless for upwards of twenty years, had fallen into decay. It was even hinted by persons living in the locality that there was something uncanny about it.

"The officer, who summoned me to attend without delay, told me as he went along that at about eleven o'clock that morning the constable on duty near the old house in question had his attention attracted by the action of the young man I was about to see, who I will call Arthur Davis, which, I need hardly say, is not his real name.

"He was knocking with his fists at the heavy nail-studded, worm-eaten door, and frantically calling out the word 'Marie.' At first the policeman had endeavoured to get him to desist, and go away quietly, but instead of doing so he became more and more excited, until at last the policeman had no alternative but to forcibly remove him to the police-station, where the inspector in charge, not knowing exactly how to deal with the case himself, had very wisely given instructions that I should be sent for.

"In reply to my inquiries, as I went along, I elicited that the individual in question was a smart, gentlemanly,

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and evidently intelligent young fellow, apparently about twenty years of age, and well-dressed. In fact he appeared to have taken extra care with his get up on the particular occasion in question, being attired—so my informant stated—in a well-fitting blue frock coat, with a white button hole, lavender tie, and gloves to match, and light coloured trousers.

"'Going to be best man at a wedding, perhaps?' I remarked laughingly.

"'No, sir, he was to have been married this morning,' he said; 'and that's all we can get out of him.'

"'Had he been drinking, do you think?'

"'No, sir, he is perfectly sober, but seems to be labouring under very great excitement; he was trembling all over when I last saw him.'

"'Ah,' I thought to myself, 'a case of over-study, probably.'

"A few minutes later found me in the private room at the police-station set apart for my special use.

"The inspector, a good-natured fellow who had been spoilt by red tapeism, had been considerate enough to allow Mr. Arthur Davis to take a seat there, pending my arrival, and when I came in suggested that he should retire and leave me alone with Mr. Davis, who was, I could see, in a high state of feverish excitement.

"My first object was to restore his mental equilibrium, as far as possible, and after a minute or two he had become sufficiently calm to express a desire to tell me his story, which I cordially agreed to; and he did so, as near as I can remember, in the following words:

"'I am a student of chemistry,' he said, 'and am employed by a large firm of chemical manufacturers. Some months ago my firm received an order from a customer, giving an address at —— Street, for a very peculiar class of goods, so unusual, in fact, that it was anticipated there would be considerable difficulty in supplying them, and I was instructed to call at the address given with a view to seeing if the order had been taken correctly, or if it would admit of any modification.

"'I had not much difficulty in finding the street named, and also the house, which was old-fashioned, and differed from those on either side both in size and style of architecture.

"'I knocked twice before anyone came, and then the door was carefully opened a few inches, by a queer, wizened-looking old man, who asked suspiciously what it was I wanted; for reply, I handed him my credentials, a card of my firm, which I had taken the precaution to have with me.

"'The old fellow's face lightened up at once, and after undoing several bolts and a chain, opened the door wide, and asked me to come in. Having done so, he carefully closed it again, and then preceded me into a good-sized room on the ground floor, fitted up as a laboratory.

"'It contained a furnace such as mineralogists use; and, in one corner, a glass bowl was standing over a gas jet, containing a curious liquid which was bubbling away at a great rate. I was particular in noticing these things, thinking they might afford some clue as to the reason of the unusual order we had received.

"'In the course of a brief conversation, during which I gathered that our new customer was engaged in a series of chemical experiments, I learnt enough of his objects to be extremely interested in their subsequent development, and promised to return myself with the particular compound he wished for, instead of sending it by a messenger.

"'He was evidently much delighted at the interest I evinced, and just as I was going away, called out to his daughter, Marie, one of the most beautiful girls I had ever seen, I thought, to tell her that he had at last succeeded in obtaining what he had so long been in want of, and that I had promised to deliver it in the course of the day.

"'"I am so glad, papa," was her reply; spoken in a soft musical tone which seemed to thrill me to the heart

"'I may pass over briefly what followed; suffice it to say that in me the old gentleman found a willing assistant in his experiments, and much of my spare time was passed in his laboratory.

"'Ah,' he exclaimed excitedly, 'I see you guess my secret. We fell in love with each other; who could help it? And one day I ventured to ask his permission to marry Marie.

"'His reply was not encouraging: "Tut, tut, Marie is only a child, not old enough to think of such things; and now about the action of this acid," referring to an experiment we were engaged upon at the time, as if the matter of my love for Marie was not worthy of further consideration.

"'When I told her, later on, how he had received my proposal, she did not, as I expected, appear dejected, but, on the contrary, told me to be patient, and that she knew she could obtain her father's consent. This she eventually did, and the day was at length fixed for our marriage.'

"He paused; and, with a view to encouraging him, I asked him when was it to be?

"'Good gracious! don't you understand? To-day. We were to be married to-day. We were to be married this morning, and now—I shall go mad, I think!'

"'Try and compose yourself so as to continue your story,' I said. 'You left off at the point where the old gentleman had given his consent to your union with his daughter.'

"'Yes, yes, but I ought to have told you more about him. Although the house they lived in was large enough to accommodate a big family and three or four servants, I soon discovered that they only occupied a portion of it—a bedroom each, the laboratory I have already mentioned, and one sitting-room (her room he called it), where we all three used to sit for hours at times when her father had no particular experiment to be worked out.

"'There was no one else in the house—no servant—but a woman used to come in for a few hours daily.

"'When her father had once given his consent to our union, the subject seemed to have entirely escaped his memory until a few days ago, when, on our telling him the day fixed for our marriage he gave Marie a most beautiful Indian scarf, which he said he wished her to wear on her wedding day.

"'The texture was of finest gossamer web, and had apparently been constructed from some mineral substance, as it had the most brilliant sheen of various colours I ever saw, and although so light that a puff of wind would have blown it away, yet, when Marie put it on over her white dress (the one she was to be married in), it seemed to effectually envelop her in a soft clinging embrace.

"'When she had it on this morning—yes, this morning!' he said excitedly, 'she looked like an angel. We all three had breakfast together, her father making the coffee, and in honour of the occasion we had a bottle of wine, very sweet, and it was effervescing, I remember.

"'Breakfast over, Marie went to her room to dress

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herself. We were to be married at eleven o'clock quite quietly, and her father confided to me that he had, he thought, at last discovered a secret to fathom which he had been engaged in experimenting upon for some years past, and that when Marie and I returned from our honeymoon and took up our abode with him (we were only going to be away a fortnight), he hoped to be able to take me into his confidence.

"'He was going to give me some further details when Marie re-appeared, dressed in a white gown, with the Indian scarf over it. The rays of the summer sun, shining in at the begrimed window, fell immediately upon her where she stood, and she looked the incarnation of female loveliness.

"'Just then the carriage that was to take us to the church drew up outside the door, and we all three went downstairs, her father first, then Marie, and I bringing up the rear. Her father took his seat with his back to the horses.

"'I assisted Marie to get in, and was just entering the carriage myself, when, in a tone of affright, she exclaimed: "My bracelet, I have forgotten it, and I must have it. I left it in the laboratory last night, I remember." And before I could stop her she was gone.

"'I stood on the doorstep awaiting her return; the old man remained seated in the brougham apparently lost in thought. After what seemed an interminable time—I dare say it was not more than a few minutes—as she had not come back, I followed her. I have some idea that her father called out to me; but if he did I did not hear what he said.

"'The laboratory was, as I think I told you, an isolated room at the back of the house on the ground floor, and to reach it I had to pass through a long passage. As I made my way along it I became aware of a strange odour, unlike anything I had ever before experienced, which seemed to be gradually overpowering me. I fought against its seductive influence, however, and presently found myself at the door of the laboratory.

"'On opening it I was almost overwhelmed with the sight of a strange mist, accompanied by the odour I had already noticed, and standing in the middle of the room, only the outline of her figure being discernible, I saw my Marie. She was swaying to and fro as if in a state of utter helplessness, and, as I rushed forward to clasp her in my arms, I distinctly heard her whisper, as if in tearful agony: "Farewell, darling; 'tis best so."

"'Suddenly where she had been standing was nothing but mist, and I sought for her in vain. I uttered a cry of despair, and instantly the mist cleared away, and a single glance served to show that the room and its surroundings were exactly as I had last seen them. But on the floor immediately where I had just seen Marie standing was a small glittering heap being all that remained of that accursed Indian scarf.

"'That is my story, sir, I know no more; remember nothing further than being forcibly brought here by a policeman who found me endeavouring to obtain admittance at the house where I last saw her.'

"'Do you know the police say they saw no carriage, and the house where they found you has not been occupied for over twenty years?'

"For reply he only shook his head: 'I have told you the truth,' he added quietly, all symptoms of excitement having left him with the conclusion of his strange story. His emotion was succeeded by a display of extreme nervous sensibility, as evidenced by a violent trembling, the results of which might, I knew, prove very serious.

"The great thing was to keep him as quiet as possible, and I prevailed upon the good-natured inspector to allow me, as no charge had been recorded, to take him to my house; which I did, and gave him an opiate, hoping that on his awakening the delusion might have faded from his memory."

"And did it?" I asked.

"He is as convinced of its reality to-day as he was then," was the doctor's emphatic reply. "The strange thing is I made it my duty to at once go and see his employers, and they showed me an order duly signed, but bearing neither date nor address, and written in a cramped foreign hand, requesting to be served with the very compounds Mr. Davis declared he had supplied to the old gentleman, and which, as it has since transpired, are of invaluable use in connection with certain mineralogical experiments.

"My next move was, as you may suppose, to try and find out the house named. To find the street was easy enough, but there was not a house in it in any way answering to the description given, and the place where the policeman found the young fellow hammering away and incoherently calling out to Marie, was more than a mile distant.

"It is, I suppose, needless for me to say that not the slightest trace has ever been forthcoming of the lady or her father.

"For a long time Davis was under my care, in a very critical condition; but he finally recovered, and, far from being out of his mind, is, as I told you, now regarded—and not without reason—as one of the most clever scientists of the day.

"And what is my opinion? I confess I am unable to give one, but when you asked me if many of my insane patients have extraordinary delusions, it occurred to me to narrate the case of an absolutely sane person who was once similarly affected; that is the only explanation I can offer."

PETER PARR.

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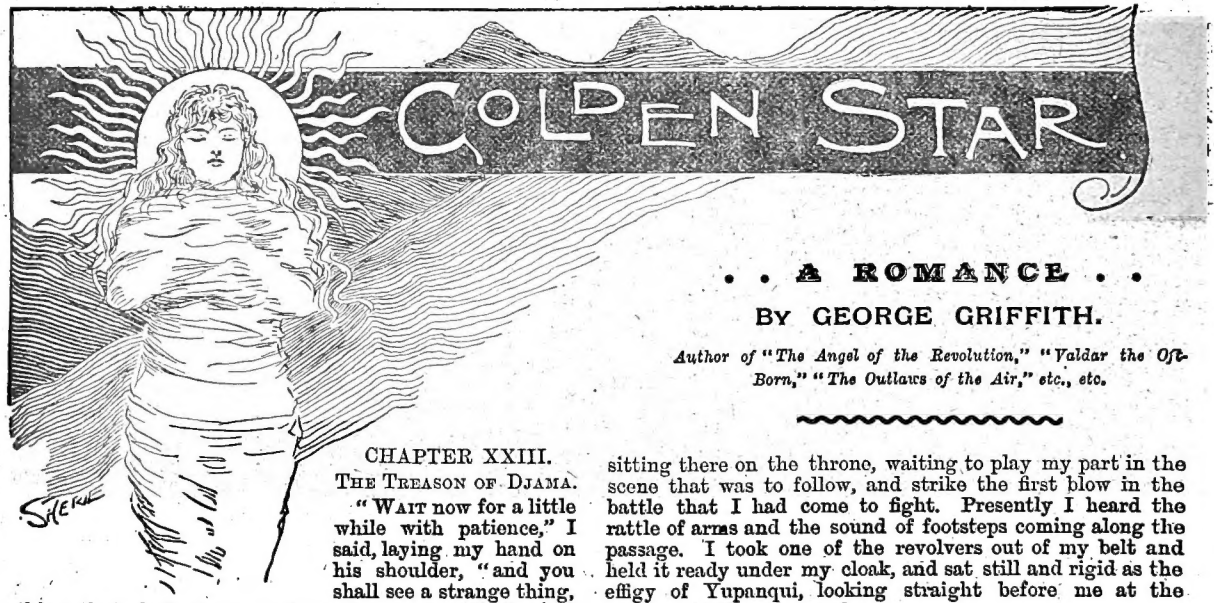

. . A ROMANCE . .

BY GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "Valdar the Oft-Born," "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TREASON OF DJAMA.

"WAIT now for a little while with patience," I said, laying my hand on his shoulder, "and you shall see a strange thing, a thing that shall show you how strong are still the old traditions in the land of the Incas. Lie here and do not let yourself be seen till I send a messenger for you. It will not be very long."

He nodded and I rose quietly to my feet and went round the hollow in which the Sayacusca stands until I got the great stone between me and the place where the soldiers were standing, and then I went down on my hands and knees and crept quietly towards it and climbed up a flight of steps carved in it. This took me to the top of the cleft in which is the broken stairway. I climbed down this and dropped softly into the hole at the bottom. It was dry now, for Tupac had done that which I had bidden him in the throne-room. I felt my way down the steps till I came to the wall at the bottom. Then I whispered his name and he answered out of the darkness in the old language:

"I am here, Lord, and all that has been ordered is done."

I crept towards him along the wall, measuring my way along it with my outstretched arms till I knew that I had come to the revolving stone which closed the way into the hall. He was standing against it and one of the others was with him. I felt over the door till I found the silver socket, and then we opened the door as before with the bar, which Tupac had brought. Then I went down through the hall and lighted a lantern and went into the little chamber where, as before, I changed my clothing for the Imperial robes, and set the Llautu on my head, but I kept on my belt under my cloak and put two revolvers in it in case I should need them, and when I went back into the hall Tupac and the others were lighting candles and putting them in the holders round the walls as I had bidden them. When this was done I said to him:

"Go now and bring the others down—first the soldiers with their officer, by whose side you must keep closely, and see that your knife is ready. Then let Ainu bring the Men of the Blood and the strangers quickly after them and bid Anahuac and Ainu close the door when the last man has entered."

The others were lighting candles.

He bowed his head, and the two went out and left me sitting there on the throne, waiting to play my part in the scene that was to follow, and strike the first blow in the battle that I had come to fight. Presently I heard the rattle of arms and the sound of footsteps coming along the passage. I took one of the revolvers out of my belt and held it ready under my cloak, and sat still and rigid as the effigy of Yupanqui, looking straight before me at the entrance at the other end.

Tupac came in first, and close behind him was a Spanish officer with a drawn sword in his hand. After him came the soldiers, two and two, with their rifles and bayonets. The officer stopped and stared about him, blinking with eyes half dazzled by the sudden light and the glitter of the gold and jewels which he saw wherever he looked. The same instant I saw the gleam of steel in Tupac's hand close to the Spaniard's throat. Then he said to him in Spanish:

"Put up your sword, Señor, and come with me and beg your life from the Son of the Sun who sits yonder on his throne."

The Spaniard uttered a loud cry of amazement as his eyes fell upon me, for so far he had not seen me, having been too much taken up by the splendours of the hall. Then he turned and called to his soldiers, but while the cry was still in his throat Tupac's arm went round his neck and the knife-point touched his skin. Then he bade two of the soldiers take the sword out of his hand and hold him fast, which they did greatly to his wonder, for he did not know that the betrayer was already betrayed. As soon as he was safe Tupac told the other soldiers to take their places along the walls, and they did so in silence, yet wondering greatly at all they saw. There were four and twenty of them, not counting the two who held the officer, all men of Indian blood whom the Spaniards* had made rather slaves than soldiers to fight their petty quarrels for them for little pay and scanty food.

After them came Anahuac and Ainu and the rest of the Men of the Blood, bringing with them Djama and the Professor blindfolded and Francis Hartness with his eyes unbound. All this time I had neither moved nor made a sound, and the soldiers were looking at me almost in terror, wondering whether I was truly a living man or one of the dead Incas with living eyes in his head. As for the Spanish officer, being a coward, as many of his sort are, he was already white with fear and his knees

*The Inca naturally does not distinguish between the modern Peruvians and their Spanish ancestors.

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were shaking as he stood between the two soldiers who held him. When all had entered Anahuac came and prostrated himself before me and said:

"The commands of the Son of the Sun are obeyed. All are here and the door is shut."

Before I answered him I called Francis Hartness to me and said:

"Come here and stand by me, my friend, for I shall need your counsel."

He came and stood by me on my right hand, saying as he looked still wonderingly about him:

"This means treachery, I suppose, and after that, tragedy. Is that why you left Ruth and Golden Star in the fortress? I am afraid I see what it means, and I hope for Ruth's sake you will do justice with as much mercy as you can."

"You shall see," I answered. "But if it were not for her you would see justice without mercy."

Then I bade Anahuac rise and told him and Tupac to unbind the eyes of Djama and the Professor and bring them before me.

As Djama's eyes opened to the light he stared about him in silence for a moment. His face was very pale, and his lips were twitching and trembling. The Professor, too, looked about him, also wondering greatly at what he saw, but neither of them spoke till they had been led forward and stood before me. Then, while Djama still kept silence, the Professor, looking from me to Hartness, said in a voice that had much wonder but no fear or sign of guilt in it:

"What is this? What does all this mean? What are all these soldiers here for, Vilcaroya? I thought it was so important that all this should be kept secret? Surely no one has betrayed you already? But no, that can't be. Hartness, what *does* it all mean?"

"It means, first," I said, speaking very slowly and not in a loud voice, "that you have been brought here with Laurens Djama to take the oath which you agreed to take never to reveal the secrets of the things that you have learned. I ask your pardon for the rude way in which my people have brought you, but it was necessary."

Then I turned to Djama who was standing solemn and motionless with clenched teeth and set face like one who knows that he stands near his doom and has no hope of mercy, and said:

He was already white with fear.

"Now, Laurens Djama, are you ready to do as you promised to do when I said that I would give you the half of this gold for what you have done for me and Golden Star? Are you ready to swear the oath here, in the presence of these witnesses that you swore to me then?"

He drew himself up and looked at me boldly, for he was a brave man although his heart was black, and said to me with a hard, harsh laugh in his voice:

"You have been too clever for me, and so I suppose you have the right to mock me. There is no need to go on with this farce. The sight of your treasures gave me the gold-fever I suppose, and it drove me mad as it has driven many others mad, and I betrayed you. There is no use saying any more. I see that I have been betrayed, too, and that my life is in your hands, so I need only say that I keep the right of taking it myself in my own way."

"There is no need for that yet," I said, "and others are concerned in this beside you."

Then I turned from him to Francis Hartness and said:

"I cannot speak the Spanish speech, and I would not if I could. Do you therefore speak to the Spaniard yonder and bid him say how he came to be here with his soldiers. Tell him, too, that if he lies or refuses to speak he shall be buried in the gold he came to steal until the weight of it crushes his life out. But say to him that if he speaks the truth and holds nothing back and does as I shall bid him he shall have his life, and afterwards as much gold as three men can carry."

So then Francis Hartness turned to the trembling Spaniard and questioned him, and he confessed freely as soon as he knew he was not to be killed, and told how Djama had gone to the Governor of Cuzco and told him of my coming and of a great treasure that he would show him, and of others that I knew the secret of and might be made to reveal, and how he had bargained that half of all that was found should be his and the other half the Governor's if he would help him to carry it to the coast in safety and put it on a steamer. The Spaniard told also how the Governor, who was his own father, had only half believed this story, and had bidden him bring a company of soldiers to the appointed place and see if there was any truth in Djama's story, and if he found there was, to take Djama and all of us prisoners and carry us back to Cuzco and put us into the prison until he could question us the next day.

Then I turned to Djama.

When he had finished, Djama laughed again and said:

"There's the honour of a Peruvian! Serve me right for being such a fool as to trust to it!"

But I bade him sternly to hold his peace till he should be told to speak, and then, when Francis Hartness had told me in English what the Spaniard had said, I bade Tupac and Anahuac stand forward and tell of their share in what had been done so that all might understand. They told their story in Quichua, and when I translated it into English to Francis Hartness I made few words of it, of which the meaning was this.

Ever since Tupac and his comrades had recognised me as their Lord and sworn their faith to me they and others whom they trusted had industriously spread abroad the news of my coming, though telling nothing that would make a traitor able to betray us, and in proof of their story little wedges of gold, stamped with the ancient symbol of the Sun, had been passed from hand to hand as earnest of my promise that I would use the hidden treasures of the Incas for the benefit of my people and make gold money where now there was only silver and copper.

By this time, not only had the golden wedges gone far and wide through the land, but nearly all the soldiers of pure Indian blood had been won over to my cause, for, as I have said, and as everyone in the country knows, these soldiers are treated with great hardness by their Spanish masters, who often pay them nothing for many weeks or months together, and give them scanty food and hard usage, and cast them into prison or flog them and shoot them if they think to do anything to get justice. Moreover, there are always factions of men they call politicians, scheming for power and setting the soldiers fighting against one another and against their countrymen for no benefit to themselves. So what Francis Hartness had told me on the night that Golden Star had come back to life had already begun to come true. More than half the garrison of Cuzco had already been won over, and only waited for the signal which should bid the whole Indian population of the valley rise to seize the arms and ammunition in the city and make the officers and the Governor and all the officials prisoners.

Anahuac's daughter was a servant in the Governor's house, and this girl understood Spanish, though she pretended only to know Quichua and the dialect of the

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people, and she had been set to watch,* and Tupac's eldest son had also been secretly watching all the comings and goings of Djama since we came to Cuzco. In this way his visit to the Governor had been made known to me, and then one of the soldiers in the company that had been ordered to go with the Governor's son to the Rodadero had told Tupac of the order, and I had arranged with him how the surprise was to be carried out, and this, as you have seen, had been done with complete success.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A GOLDEN PRISON.

WHEN I had finished telling this to Hartness I turned to the Professor and said to him kindly:

"There has been nothing said that brings any share of the guilt of this treason to you, so now if you will promise me on your faith and honour as an Englishman to keep my secrets and obey such commands as I shall put upon you for our own safety and that of all of us, you shall go free and you shall have the choice of going back to England or to any other country until the war is over, or of staying here under my protection until you can go away safely with the treasure which shall be yours. But if you go now you cannot take it with you, for in a few days from now there will be war throughout the whole land, and it would be impossible to take so much treasure to the coast. Now, what do you say?"

Putting his hand to his pistol pocket.

He thought for a moment and then he said:

"I am not a man of war as you know, Vilcaroya, but I hope I am a man of honour. I have never breathed a syllable that could have given anyone an inkling of your secret, and I promise you solemnly that I never will. What Djama has done distresses me even more than it amazes me. I would have staked my life on his honesty, and if you will release him and let him come with me——"

"No, no, my friend," I said, quickly and sternly. "What you would ask is impossible. His aims were deeper and his sin was blacker than it has been shown to be here. He did not betray us for gold alone, for he knew that I would keep my promise and give him more than he could want. He would have given me to my enemies to be killed—it might have been by tortures to make me say where my treasures were hidden—so that he might have had Golden Star at his mercy."

"It was your own fault, curse you! why did you not give her to me?" Djama cried suddenly, breaking loose from the two who held his arms and putting his hand to his pistol pocket. The next instant my own revolver was out from under my cloak and levelled at his heart.

"Another motion and I will kill you," I said. "Though so quick a death would be too good for you. Tie his hands behind his back and hold him faster this time. Give me his pistol."

Before I had done speaking they had seized him again in spite of his struggles, and paying no heed to his cries and imprecations—for by this time his long pent-up passion had broken loose and made him almost mad—and when they had given me his pistol I said to him:

"I told you that Golden Star should be yours if you could win her as an honest man. But you sought to steal her as you would have stolen my gold. That is enough, keep silence now or you shall be gagged."

Then I held out my hand to the Professor and said:

"I will accept your promise, for you are an honest man. There is my hand. Now we will be friends as before, and I will answer for your safety. Will you go or stay with us?"

"I will stay," he said, "for my studies are not yet complete, and besides I am anxious to see what the Inca empire will be like when it is restored."

"I am glad that you say so," I replied, "for you are welcome and you shall make your home here always if you will."

Then I bade them stand the Spanish officer in the Professor's place beside Djama, and, turning to Francis Hartness, said:

"These men are worthy of death, for they would have delivered us to death, but I cannot kill Djama since Joyful Star might hate me for it, and if I do not kill him it would not be justice to kill the Spaniard. What shall I do?"

"I see nothing for it," he said, after thinking awhile, "but shutting them up safely until we have got this business over and then sending them out of the country and forbidding them to come back under pain of death. There are plenty of places that they would be perfectly safe in."

"That is well thought of, my friend," I said, "and it shall be done. They came for gold and they shall have it. They shall live in it, and see gold and nothing but gold till the sight of it is hateful to them. They shall have a prison of gold, and eat and drink from gold, and sleep and walk and sit on gold. Yes, truly, they shall have enough of gold before they see the light of day again. Now tell the Spaniard what I have said."

He did so, and at first the wretch's eyes glittered and then grew dim when the true meaning of his doom came upon him, for it meant he knew not how long an imprisonment with a man who had betrayed his friends, and whom, as he had confessed, he would himself have betrayed; and he thought, too, that I had only promised him his life and the gold to make him speak, and that now I would keep him prisoner and perhaps kill him in the end. So he fell on his knees like the craven that he was and begged for mercy, and told Hartness of my promise, and with Hartness' lips I told him only that he must have patience and wait until it was my pleasure to do what I had said.

After this I called Tupac and Anahuac and told them what I wished done, and they took a score of their men and forthwith began to build in a corner of the hall beside the throne a chamber measuring some ten feet each way of the oblong blocks of gold which were piled up in the pyramid behind the throne, and while they were doing this I called the soldiers before me and told them, speaking in their own dialect, that if they were faithful to me until the end of the war each man should have two ounces weight of gold paid to him every month, and one ounce more for each of his comrades that he could persuade to join us, and for this night's work I would give them each a wedge of gold of the weight of four ounces, which was more money than all that they had earned in their lives before, and when I had promised this they went on their knees and swore faith to me and destruction to their hated Spanish masters.

So he fell on his knees.

Then I told them how Francis Hartness would lead them

* This is quite a common thing in Peru, and the Indian women make exceedingly clever spies.

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to battle and to victory as he had led the soldiers of his own nation, and after that he spoke to them in Spanish and told them what to tell their comrades and what was to be done with the arms and ammunition when the signal for the rising was given.

All this while Djama and the Spaniard were kept standing watching the building of their golden prison-cell. The men worked swiftly and the many hands made the toil light, and they built the walls up very thick and strong, fitting the golden bricks closely into each other and making the walls smooth and without hand or foot-hold, so that neither could any of the bricks be got out nor the walls be climbed. The cell was divided into two by another wall, and when the walls were finished they were about ten feet high and there was an opening into each cell in front large enough for a man to crawl in on his hands and knees.

There is your house of gold.

When all was ready I said to Djama:

"There is your house of gold. Go and dwell in it till it shall be safe for me to release you. Every day, as I have said, you shall eat and drink from plates and cups of gold and you shall dream of gold until this gold-fever of yours is cured."

"Until I have lgone gold-mad, you mean!" he cried, snarling at me like angry dog. "It is just such a vengeance as a half civilised tyrant would have thought of. You know as well as I do that I shall go mad in there unless I kill myself first."

"You have your choice!" I said. "I will make your punishment no lighter. If you think to pull the walls down they will fall on you and crush you, and you will be buried in gold, and if I am told that you have tried to break out, I will put chains of gold on you so heavy that you shall not be able to drag them across your cell, while if you are peaceful and patient all your wants shall be attended to by those that I shall appoint, and you shall have everything but liberty and the light of day. Now go in."

"I won't!" he cried with an imprecation that ended in a scream. "I shall go mad in there, I tell you, and that is a thousand times worse than death for me. I won't! I won't!"

"Then you shall be thrust in," I said.

I made a sign to those who held him, and they, seeing what I meant, took him by the body and the legs and carried him, feet foremost, kicking and struggling towards the hole. Then they thrust him in with his arms still bound. But when he was half-way through I bade one of them loose the cords a little, so that he could free himself afterwards. The Spaniard made no resistance, and when he was bidden crept trembling like a hound that has been flogged into his cell, and when they were both in I ordered the openings to be built up.

Francis Hartness and the Professor had gone away to the other end of the hall, not liking to see this, and yet knowing that it would be useless to seek to persuade me to more mercy.

"Our work here is done now," I said, going to them, "and it would be well for us to go back to the fortress and sleep, for the morning is near and there will be much work to do before long."

"I don't think I shall sleep much after what I have seen to-night," said Hartness, "and if I did sleep I think I should dream of that golden prison and those two poor wretches hungering and thirsting for daylight and liberty with the means of buying any luxury the world could give them within reach of their hands."

"Yes," said the Professor, "it is a curious situation, isn't it—quite apart from the personal interest it has for us. Now, in England or America, a room built with walls and floor of solid gold would be a luxury that only a millionaire could afford, and he would probably be thought a fool for building it, and yet here it is only a prison in which a man might well starve to death. Let us get away from here as soon as we can. I really don't want to hear any more of Djama's ravings than I can help. Good Heavens! who ever would have thought that a man of his culture and learning and strength of mind could possibly have made such a blackguard of himself?"

"Well," said Hartness, with a dry sort of laugh, "you see he was the victim of the two passions that have done most to drive men mad or make scoundrels of them since the world began—the love of woman and the lust for gold. I don't pretend to understand it myself, because he had gold enough promised to him, and there is no telling but that he might have won the woman; but there, you never can tell how far any man is mad or sane until he's tried."

"But there was something else, my friend," I said, "there was, as you say, lust of gold and love of woman, but there was also hate. Why, I know not; but though I owe my new life to that man, I have hated him and he has hated me since we learnt to know each other as living men. You know, too, how, as I told you, Golden Star shrank from him as though he had been a poisonous reptile, and yet why should I hate him and yet love her who is of the same flesh and blood as he is?"

"I would rather discuss the problem in the open air or at the hacienda than here," said the Professor, "and even then I don't suppose we should get much nearer to a solution, for these things are mysteries and mostly past finding out, yet it may be that you and he, the sons of different centuries, may actually have embodied in you the differences and the antipathies of the two ages and the two races to which you belong. There is no telling. But come, let us get out of here, please. I really can't stand this any longer."

"Nor I," said Hartness. "For goodness sake let us go! This is a good deal more trying to the nerves than a cavalry charge or a smart skirmish."

"Very well," I said. "We will go."

Then I called to Tupac and bade him tell the soldiers and the rest that the night's work was over and it was time to go. We gave each of the soldiers his wedge of gold, as I had promised them, and once more I made them swear that each would kill any of the others who thought to betray us. Then Tupac and Anahuac went and opened the stone door, and we returned from the Hall of Gold to the upper earth, leaving Djama and his fellow traitor still raving and crying within the walls of their golden prison.

(To be continued.)

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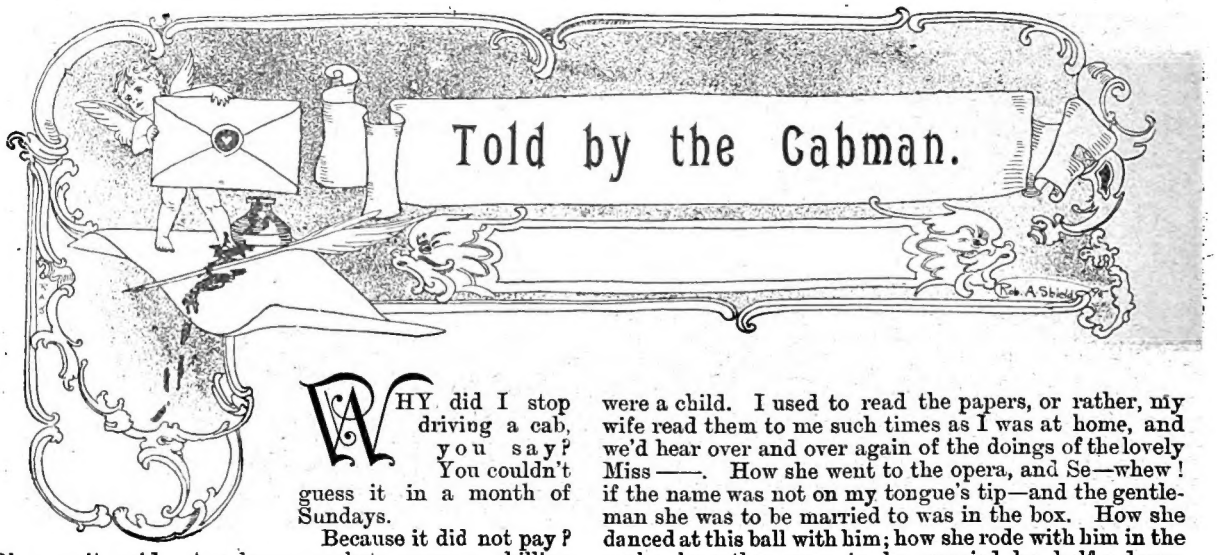

Told by the Cabman.

WHY did I stop driving a cab, you say? You couldn't guess it in a month of Sundays.

Because it did not pay? Oh, no; it paid. A cabman pockets many a shilling that no one knows anything about.

Many a story I could tell you that you would say you couldn't believe.

I drove an escaped felon once, who changed his clothes in my cab, and came out looking like a young minister in a white cravat and blue spectacles.

"Johnny, burn those things inside your trap," says he, when I set him down at a station, and threw me two quid; and I burnt the convict suit and the old woman's gown and hood that had covered them.

I read about his scrape next day. He was a counterfeiter; but the money he had given me was genuine.

Driving about London at night was lively, and it paid.

My reason for leaving the business isn't to be told in a few words, but if you like to hear the story, here it is:

One of my regular fares was a gentleman that belonged to a swell club.

He was as handsome a man of forty as you ever saw in your life.

Why, you'd know his name if I was to tell it, though he died five years ago. He was rich, and he was high in politics, and every one knew he was going to marry a Society girl, a beauty of eighteen. When a man gets famous enough to have these things put in the papers, you may say he is a well-known man.

Oh, everybody knew him, high and low. How often I used to drive him to see that girl! You see my cab was a natty little affair that stylish men liked, and my horse was a dandy.

Almost always he stopped at the florist's for flowers, or at a big confectioner's or at a jeweller's. He went with his hands full every time.

Generally he took his sweetheart out in something else; but I've driven them often enough, too, and she was one of those angelic-looking girls, with fair hair, and blue eyes, that make you feel as if sin could not come near them. She had soft, baby ways, too, and seemed to love him almost as much as he loved her, though in another way entirely.

She looked up to him, and he treated her as if she were a child. I used to read the papers, or rather, my wife read them to me such times as I was at home, and we'd hear over and over again of the doings of the lovely Miss ——. How she went to the opera, and Se—whew! if the name was not on my tongue's tip—and the gentleman she was to be married to was in the box. How she danced at this ball with him; how she rode with him in the park; how they were to be married by half-a-dozen bishops; how this belle and that belle would be bridesmaids. Then again something else. My wife was so mighty interested, because I drove the man you see. But there was something I did not tell my wife—the best of women talk too much. Four or five times I had seen Miss —— when she was not with her future husband; far from it.

At these times she was always walking with a lackadaisical masher sort of chap—very loving and confidential. It was always in some queer, out-of-the-way place. Once when I'd driven a party out to High Bridge; once in Bushey Park—Sunday, when society folks don't go there—once at the Crystal Palace at the fireworks, and then his arm was about her waist. Once—well, no matter—lots of times.

But still it might be no harm, a bit of flirtation, and it warn't my place to blab to the big man who was going to marry her.

But one day the masher came into our stables to hire a cab for himself, and when he had gone I went to the boss.

"If you don't mind, Mr. Jenckens," I said, "I'd ask you to tell me that chap's name; seems to me I've seen him."

"That?" said Jenckens. "Why, that's the tenor at the Covent Garden show. They say he sings like a lark, and that all the girls are in love with him, that Society women write him love-letters, and that he cuts up high jinks generally. Signor Marini, that's his name; and he's one of those darned Eyetalians."

The boss didn't set much store by Eyetalians, you see.

"Thank you, sir," I says; and to myself, says I: "Ah, ha, and oh, ho! them society girls with angel faces are not to be depended upon. I'll never judge a woman by her eyes again, nor by her manners."

That was in October, and that night I drove the future husband to Miss——'s, to a dinner party her mother gave.

I knew what it was, and of course he was mentioned among the guests.

Two months from that night—yes, it was just two months—my gentleman came to me with a look on his face that I had never seen before.

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"Dick," said he, "walk out with me, will you?" And, of course, I walked.

When we were quite out of earshot of the stables, he said: "I'm going to order a cab to-night, and ask for you as I always do. Drive off as usual, but put the cab somewhere and hire the shabbiest concern you can find, and meet me at two o'clock at night at the corner of —— Street, near the new building."

"Yes, sir," said I.

"At two," said he again. "Sit on your box and wait."

"What larks can he be up to now?" says I to myself; but I only answered: "Yes, sir."

The order was given to the boss for "Eleven o'clock, go and return," and at half-past one I'd exchanged the cabs and had the most rickety old trap you ever saw at the corner he mentioned.

A minute or so after, a big man in a long ulster and soft hat came up.

"Cab engaged?" said he.

I knew Mr. ——'s voice, but I answered: "No, sir," and he put his foot on the step.

"Drive on half way down —— street," said he, "and stop until I tell you to go on."

At two we were in the square the angelic young lady lived in, not quite opposite the house. At ten minutes past two a man turned out of Grosvenor Avenue and walked up the street. He was whistling one of the prettiest tunes I ever heard, though what it was I could not tell you, and he passed the door of the house Miss —— lived in and went on to the corner.

It was the man I had seen her with; it was the man the boss had told me was Signor Marini. He did not whistle this time, but when he came to the door again he went softly up the steps and seemed to be let in by some one.

I waited fifteen minutes; he did not come out. Half an hour he was there still.

"You can drive on," said a voice from the door of the cab, "and up the avenue until I tell you to drop me."

I did what he told me to do, of course, then exchanged my cab and went home.

Three times I did this. Three times I saw Signor Marini enter Miss ——'s house. The last time a five-pound note was put into my hand, and for six days I did not hear from my gentleman.

The next time I did, he told me that I was to call for him at his hotel at nine o'clock. I went.

He came down in evening dress with his light overcoat on his arm and a crush hat in his hand.

"To ——club-house," he said, nodding at me; "and I want you to wait at the side entrance. Don't leave your box."

"All right, sir," said I. He reached something up to me. I thought it was a cigar, and just said: "Thank ye." But it turned out to be a roll of five-pound notes —ten of them. I knew that that meant business.

They were having a grand time at the club, and the time passed on and they grew jollier.

It was two o'clock when I saw the tenor, Signor Marini, who was one of the guests, I heard afterwards, come out and walk away. The next minute my gentleman came out at the side door, without his hat, without his overcoat. He crossed the pavement at a stride, and stepped into the cab. There was no one at the club door.

"Follow that man," he whispered through the window behind my seat. I did it. Just before we got to the corner of the street where the young lady lived, he stopped me. By the light of the lamp we saw the singer turn the corner. It was a dark night, and a storm was coming up. I heard my cab door open, and saw my gentleman step out and pass the lamp. Two minutes more and I heard the report of a pistol. Then I saw my gentleman coming back. He stepped into the cab, and said: "The club, and wait there."

I drove him there. It was four before the last man went home. The last man was my gentleman. Two waiters helped him out. He seemed very tipsy, and roared that he wanted to open another bottle, and wanted someone to sing another song. They packed him into the cab, laughing.

"He don't do it often, either," one of the waiters said: "but he's got his load this time."

I laughed, too, and drove away. At his hotel the waiters had to help him in.

Very tipsy he looked, very, but in a minute one of the men came down and called to me, laughing:

"Mr. —— says you shan't have your fare if you don't come to get it," said he.

"All right," said I, and I went up.

As soon as I entered the door I shut it, and he got up off the bed where he lay sprawling, no more tipsy than you are this minute.

"How much?" says he.

"How much?" says I.

"Yes," says he, "how much? You drew a ticket in the lottery, you know."

"Did I?" says I.

"Yes," says he. "It is enough to enable you to leave cab-driving and start a public, and I'll cash it for you," says he.

He was as cool as a cucumber; so was I.

"You read figures better than I do," says I.

"Very well," says he, and went to his desk and wrote me out a cheque.

The next day a column of the paper was headed:

"Frightful Murder! The Great Tenor, Signor Marini, Shot in the Back on his Way Home from the —— Club Supper! Found Dead!"

And on Sunday my wife read another paragraph:

"Society is somewhat excited over the news that Miss —— has broken off her engagement with Mr. —— after all the arrangements had been made for the wedding."

"Why, your gentleman is jilted," said my wife.

"Seems so," said I, laughing.

Oh, well, no one asked me to tell what I knew, and I never did.

I have my public; my gentleman died five years ago; and Miss —— is married to a rich merchant.

F. V. Rose.

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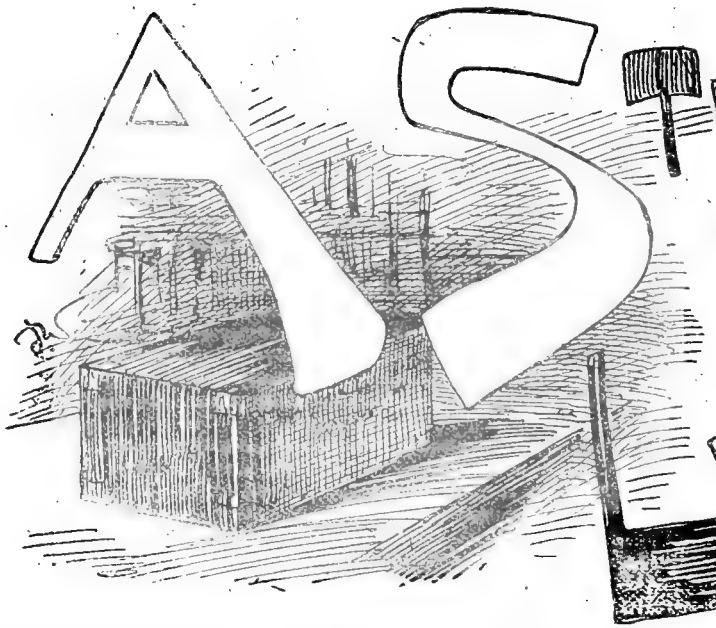
A Strange Legacy



More or less, in legal phraseology, it amounted to this: The testator, Benjamin Longfellow, of Paternoster Row, E.C., publisher, bequeathed to his brother, Andrew Longfellow, of Adelaide, South Australia, wool merchant, the balance standing to the credit of his personal account at his bankers', Messrs. Claycross, Beeming, Toots, Childers, and Co., upon the day of his death; also to his said brother, Andrew Longfellow, a black tin box, inscribed with the testator's name and the abbreviation "Auto," together with the contents of the box, at that time deposited for safe custody at the bankers' above mentioned.

Now, so far as the former clause was concerned, there was nothing extraordinary about the legacy save the fact that, on his deathbed, Mr. Benjamin Longfellow, being then of sound mind, had signed a cheque for £1,000 in favour of a deserving charity, to wit, the Royal Asylum for Impotent Artists, and in doing so had, advertently or inadvertently, reduced the said balance at his bankers' to the insignificant sum of 3s. 4d., at which figure it stood at the hour of his death.

Whether the dying publisher drew the cheque in ignorance of the figures in his pass-book, or whether he conceived himself justified in alienating the sum which, in the ordinary course of nature, would have passed to his younger brother, was a matter for his own conscience (if he had any) to decide.

What was truly extraordinary was the legacy of a black tin box.

From the point of view of sentiment, our South Australian wool merchant received the news of his dear brother's death with truly fraternal indifference. The two men had not met for many years. They had been left orphans at an early age. They were educated for charity's sake by a distant relation, and were then turned out into the world to make a living for themselves. Neither of them had ever married. Benjamin entered the city office of a publisher, and in due time (as it pleases the story-tellers to put it) raised himself by industry and perseverance to be head partner of the publishing firm, and thus to be one of the richest men in London.

Andrew, on the other hand, emigrated. He likewise, in due course, raised himself by industry and perseverance (or, as envious competitors declared, by impudence and sharp practice) to be the wealthiest man in South Australia. Indeed, so rich had he grown, and so insufferably pompous had he become, that South Australia was heartily sick of him. At last an influential syndicate had waited on him and offered to make it worth his while to part with his interest in the colony, and to go home to England to buy a baronetcy. It was at this moment that he heard of his brother's death in London. Expecting to be that gentleman's heir, he accepted the syndicate's flattering offer (including the promise of a baronetcy, if it could be had), and took the first steamer for England.

Not till he arrived in London, and called upon the family solicitors, did Andrew Longfellow learn the true state of affairs: namely, that he had only inherited 3s. 4d. and a black tin box! The remainder of Benjamin Longfellow's vast fortune was left to trustees for the building of model lodging houses in Belgravia and the endowment of a bishopric in the Uninhabited Islands.

This information was given to Andrew Longfellow by a junior partner in the firm of lawyers.

The colonial millionaire could scarcely conceal his rage at the absurd nature of the legacy—3s. 4d. and a black tin box!

"Confound it!" he exclaimed. "Am I to be a laughing stock?"

"You forget, my dear sir," answered the solicitor, "that the contents of the black tin box may outweigh the interest and literary value any mere pecuniary mark of esteem which your brother could have bequeathed to you."

"Interest! Literary value! What is that to me? Is that all you have to say?"

"Mr. Andrew Longfellow," retorted the other with some indignation, "it is not my business to say any-

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thing at all. My senior partner is the executor. I must refer you to him. He is absent this morning, but may return at any moment. If you will give me your address, I have no doubt he will be glad to call on you."

Mr. Longfellow growled out the name of his hotel.

"Meanwhile," continued the solicitor, "I may add that I have been given instructions to hand over to you your property, if you should be here."

The wool merchant grew purple.

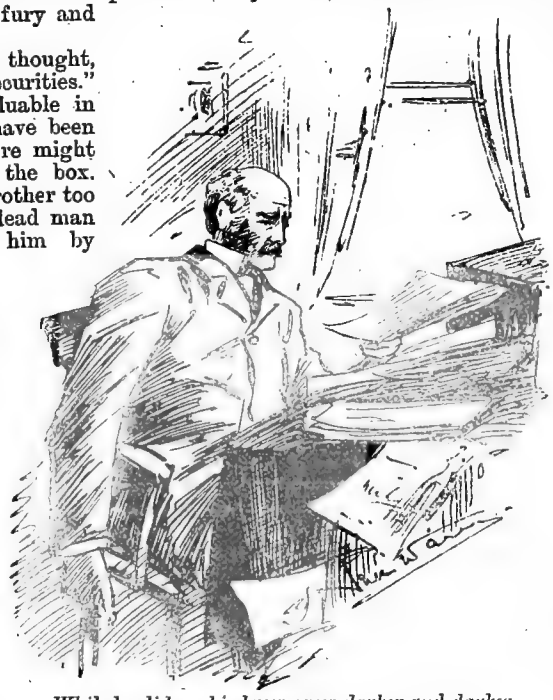
"You can keep your infernal 3s. 4d.," he vociferated. "Give me the box!"

In the ten minutes which passed on the way to the hotel, Mr. Longfellow worked himself up into a truly horrible state of alternating fury and expectation.

"Perhaps, after all," he thought, "the box contains bonds and securities." The contents were surely valuable in their way, or they would not have been deposited at the bankers. There might be script of great value in the box. Perhaps he had judged his brother too hastily over the 3s. 4d. The dead man had possibly compensated him by adding at the last moment to the treasures stored in the box, which was heavy enough, in all conscience!

These and other speculations filled his thoughts on the way to the hotel, and he arrived there nervous and irritable, but eager notwithstanding.

Andrew Longfellow shut himself up in his sitting-room and locked the door. Having placed on the table in the middle of the room the black tin box, inscribed with his brother's name and the word "Auto," he inserted and turned the key. As the lid went back, he looked anxiously inside.



While he did so, his brow grew darker and darker.

"Well, I'm dashed!" he muttered between his teeth.

Again and again he thrust in his hands, feverishly turning the contents out upon the table. While he did so, his brow grew darker and darker. The weight of the box was accounted for by the piles upon piles of letters and foolscap which were taken from it. But there was no sign of bond, coupon, share, certificate, debenture, bank-note, bill, or anything else of current value.

Nothing but bundles of letters and reams of dog's-eared manuscript! Nothing better than love-letters beginning with "Dearest" or "Darling," or some milk-sop twaddle of that kind. Pshaw! Nothing better than unbusinesslike business letters, such as unpractical dreamers might write to their publishers. Nothing better than foolscap spattered with ink, and recording the sentimental rubbish of boobies who aspired to scribble novels and poetry. Pah! To a man of common sense like Andrew Longfellow it was sickening!

Who wrote those silly epistles, and other maudlin trash? He didn't know; he didn't care. What were they to him? He couldn't read the signatures. Even if he could have done so, their names would perhaps have been unknown to him. He had lived a busy Australian life all these years, and neither knew nor cared a rap about literary people—"lazy good-for-nothings who scribbled," as he expressed it. He was a practical man, and as such lashed himself into a fury of indignation at having been made a fool of by his brother leaving him nothing better than 3s. 4d., a black tin box and a hundredweight of good "cream-laid" and "foolscap," spoilt by pen and ink.

"Waste paper," he muttered again and again.

The disappointed millionaire marched up and down his sitting-room. After a while he threw himself into a chair, and tried to read the newspapers. But the news of the day did not interest him; he knew all the news he wanted to know, namely, that he had been fooled.

Even the advertisements failed to attract, until the very words "waste paper" in print caught his eye. He read: "Mr. and Mrs. Moses Moses have left-off wearing apparel of every kind. Mr. and Mrs. M. purchase old clothes, jewellery, teeth, waste paper, etc., for ready money. Apply——." Andrew Longfellow jumped to his feet. The street named in the advertisement was close by.

In five minutes he was interviewing Mr. Moses Moses, and in five minutes more Mr. Moses Moses followed the wool merchant into his sitting-room at the hotel.

"Now, thir," said the Jew, "vat can I do for you to-day?"

"You give ready money for waste paper, don't you?"

"All dependeth, my vriend," replied the Hebrew cautiously. "Vare's the paper?"

"Here," answered the wool merchant, pointing to the table.

The Jew glanced at the article, and then at the gentleman before him and grinned.

"'Aven't you got anything better than that to thell?" he asked.

"How much?" inquired Longfellow.

"What for?"

"For that lot of paper, of course."

The Jew turned over the love-letters and peered into the manuscripts, and once again looked at the wool merchant—this time with a curious expression of face, which the latter did not observe.

"Come, come, Moses, name your price!"

Still the Jew hesitated. He turned over the bundle of letters once more, and at length asked sharply:

"Vat do you vant for them?"

"That's my business. What will you give me?"

Andrew Longfellow was not a man to give anything away. He wished the buyer to name his price.

"They ain't vorth anything but vaste paper."

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"I know that well enough!" ejaculated the old Australian.

Once more the Jew looked at him, and this time with the most peculiar expression of all.

"I'll give you five bob for them, not a thickpenth more, ath I'm a shentleman!"

"Ten shillings," demanded Longfellow.

The wily Jew knew all he required. It was evident that the vendor was entirely ignorant of any special value in the manuscripts.

"Five bob, and I sha'l be a loother any'ow."

"No!"

"Very vell, thir! If you ever vanth to thell any wearin' apparelth——"

"Here, make it seven-and-sixpence, Moses."

"Couldn't do it, thir; good day to you, thir!" and the Jew took up his hat and moved towards the door.

"Five shillings, then, confound you!" said Mr. Longfellow. "Only take the rubbish away immediately," and he emptied the box out on to the table, and shut down the lid.

"Thirtainly, thir, anythink t'oblidth. Five bob, thir; there you are, thir," and Moses laid two half-crowns on the table.

Then, with an alacrity that was truly surprising, he produced a linen bag from his pocket, swept the papers from the table, and rang the bell for a porter to help him carry off the heavy bundle.

This done, he requested the wool merchant to give him a written receipt for the five shillings. At first the millionaire ridiculed this request as being unnecessary. But the Jew insisted that "buthiness ith buthiness," and the formal receipt was at last written out, signed, and handed to him. Another moment and he was gone.

"Five bob, thir; there you are, thir."

The door had scarcely closed upon him, and the bundle he was rapidly carrying away, with a porter's aid, when it was thrown open again, and a visitor entered. The new-comer announced himself as the executor of the late Mr. Benjamin Longfellow's will and the head partner of the firm of solicitors on whom Mr. Andrew Longfellow had called that morning.

"Mr. Andrew Longfellow, I presume?"

"That's my name."

"Of course, now I can see the likeness to your late brother. By-the-bye, let me congratulate you, my dear sir, on your good fortune."

"Eh?"

"Perhaps you have not yet had time to examine the contents of the black tin box. Ah! there it is! Again let me congratulate you."

"I don't understand!" gasped the wool merchant.

"No? Why, sir, you have inherited, in the contents of that box, the finest collection of modern literary autographs in the world."

Andrew Longfellow's breath stopped, and he sank into a chair. The visitor, whose eyes rested on the outward and empty shell of the black tin box, while his fingers tapped out, so to speak, the memories connected with it, did not notice the effects of the shock he had unwittingly inflicted on the owner of the box.

"No doubt I surprise you, sir," he continued. "If there is five shillings in that box, there is £20,000. Indeed, the collection is literally priceless. It contains Burns' letters to his publishers; Scott's correspondence with his cousin; Dickens' manuscript of—I forget which of his novels; Tennyson's first draft of—I cannot recall which of Tennyson's poems it is; Lord Byron's love-letters to—I really do not remember which of his friends it was; Bulwer-Lytton's notes for a novel, to eclipse all his previous efforts; Thackeray's memoranda, with the original sketches, about—dear, dear! how my memory fails me!—to say nothing of Macaulay's commonplace books, and hundreds of other priceless treasures. Why, Mr. Longfellow, you are not looking well! Bless my soul! if the poor gentleman hasn't fainted for joy!"

In the frantic desire to speak, and cry "stop thief!" Mr. Andrew Longfellow had lost his power of speech, and swooned away.

He never recovered from the shock. When he came back to his senses, and was able to communicate what was in his mind, he explained matters to the horrified solicitor. Inquiries were at once set on foot, as to the movements of Mr. Moses Moses; but that astute party had anticipated them, and provided accordingly. Nothing but negative information about him was ever forthcoming.

"Mr. Moses had not come home!" Mr. Moses did not come home for months, nay, for years.

"Nobody knew where Mr. Moses was!" Not even Mrs. Moses.

Nothing was ever heard of him until long after Mr. Andrew Longfellow's brain had entirely given way. Nothing whatever was heard of Mr. Moses till the whole "sensation" had long blown over.

The Jew did not attempt to rely on proving his title to the manuscripts with the receipt for five shillings. He preferred taking an enjoyable tour on the American continent, and finally settling down on that side of the Atlantic under an assumed name.

What he did with the waste paper sold to him by Mr. Andrew Longfellow was never exactly known. The individual manuscripts, however, have been publicly sold from time to time in the United States, and have fetched fabulous sums.

The black tin box is empty to this day.

Paul Roper.

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A Story of the Jury Room.

So he is dead!

I looked again at the newspaper which I held in my hand and read:

"Jethro.—Died, near Hurstmere, March 18th, 1893, Emanuel Jethro, aged fifty-seven years."

He is dead after all these years, and at last I am free to reveal a terrible secret of a jury-room which has been a burden to myself and ten other men, unless they, like Jethro, have passed over the river.

In August, 1875, there was a murder trial in Hurstmere, which perhaps the older citizens of that town still remember.

I was the third juror chosen. After juror No. 6 was told to pass into the jury-box the court clerk called the name of "Emanuel Jethro."

I believe every one in the court-room was struck with the man's appearance. He walked briskly and in a peculiarly nervous manner which could not fail to attract attention. He answered the solicitor's questions eagerly. In fact, one time his answer came before the question was concluded.

The next morning the examinations of witnesses began. The evidence was short and it was conclusive.

Karl Belderman, a German youth employed as a gardener near the city, was charged with murdering his employer by splitting open his head with an axe.

He and the head-gardener had lived alone. One morning the boy came into the town, and while drinking freely had shown a large sum of money. A day later the head-gardener was found lying dead upon the floor of a room in his house, with the bloody axe that had done the work by his side.

The German youth was arrested, with some of the money still in his possession. There was proof that the boy and the gardener had been heard quarrelling about an increase of wages, which the boy had asked for and did not get.

To offset this strong array of circumstantial evidence there was nothing but the prisoner's statement, very badly told by an interpreter. He denied all knowledge of the murder, and said the money he had was given him by a man the night before as a bribe to leave his employer, that he knew nothing of the killing or who did it.

When we reached the jury-room, there seemed but two things to do—elect a foreman and bring in a verdict of guilty.

The first we did with little trouble.

Then we took a ballot, merely as a matter of form. I counted the votes, and it stood—For conviction, 11; for acquittal, 1.

"Who is the twelfth gentleman who does not know murder when he sees it?" one of the jurors asked sarcastically.

"I am," came the reply, calmly spoken by juror No. 7—Emanuel Jethro.

Then we began to argue the case with him. He looked out of the window most of the time and made no reply to any of our telling arguments. Finally he was asked if he had any reason to advance for voting as he did.

"None at all," he replied quietly, "except that I don't wish to see an innocent man hanged."

There were some more convincing arguments by the 11, and we took another vote—for conviction, 11; for acquittal, 1.

And that was the way the vote stood next morning after breakfast. We grew desperate. Finally the whole manner of Jethro changed, and he exclaimed excitedly:

"If each of you will take a solemn oath before the God that made you not to reveal what I tell you until I am dead, I will give you the reason why I do not agree to a verdict of guilty."

After some consultation and glances at the clock, which showed that the hour for reconvening of court was at hand, we, one at a time, took the oath.

In low, half-whispered tones the juror told his secret.

Fifteen minutes later we went into the court-room with a verdict of "Not guilty."

I remember distinctly the consternation on the judge's face, and the look of disgust on that of the solicitor.

The newspapers criticised us severely, and went so far as to write editorials on account of the failure of the courts to adequately punish those detected in the commission of crime.

Well, Emanuel Jethro is dead, and I believe I am now absolved from the oath he made us take.

"That German boy did not kill the old man," he told us in his dry, husky voice. "On the night before the murder a man met him and paid him to leave the farm early next morning—gave him a large sum of money which was enough to tempt him to give up his situation. And then the man who did this watched the boy as he left next morning and slipped into the room and killed the old gardener as he was preparing to rise—killed him to pay a debt that only his blood could wipe out.

"And, gentlemen," he concluded, "I am the murderer."

We looked upon the man's ashen face as the words fell from his lips, and each of us knew the story was true.

E. C. Waggener.

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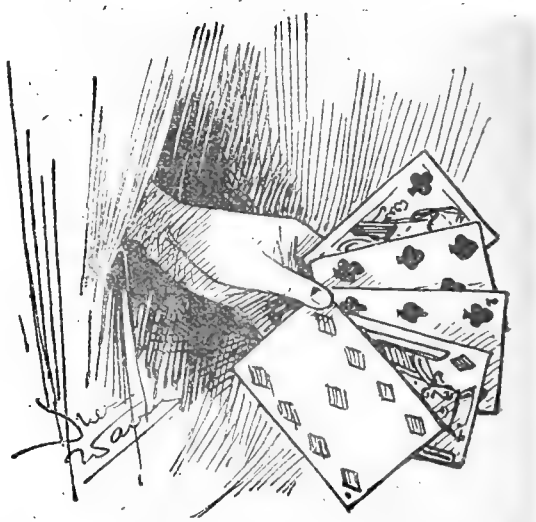
The Card-Sharper's Daughter.



IF love at first sight be possible, I certainly was in love with her.

It was in my young days, when I was visiting Paris for my amusement. I had been strolling about the city all the morning, and towards noon I found myself in the neighbourhood of the Faubourg St. Germain, when I caught sight of the beautiful unknown.

She was plainly though tastefully dressed, and had evidently been marketing, for she carried several parcels, and was accompanied by a peasant girl with some bundles of vegetables. Never, I thought, had I beheld a being so beautiful. I was not a young man to be struck with an ordinary pretty face or comely figure. This lady's form and features indeed seemed faultless; but it was something more than that that had arrested my attention—something unusual in the sweet sadness of her expression, and in the deep, thoughtful earnestness of her large dark eyes.

I stood still as she passed me, and our eyes met. Her look was cold and haughty then, and I turned away, feeling rather abashed, and not daring to follow her.

For days and days I lingered about in the hope of meeting her again, but without success; and at last I made up my mind that I would try to forget that I had ever seen her.

At about that time I made the acquaintance of M. Auguste Verrier. He was a person of venerable aspect, with long white hair and a patriarchal beard. His appearance did not betoken wealth, but his generally cultivated bearing suggested that he had seen better days.

We first met in a café to which I occasionally resorted, and I soon found from his conversation that he was a man of considerable education.

After we had met some half-a-dozen times, I happened to mention that I took great interest in matters pertaining to art. He then informed me that he was a painter by profession, and modestly invited me to accompany him to his studio and inspect some of his works.

I assented, and he conducted me to a crazy, old, half-timbered house, long since pulled down, in the Faubourg St. Germain. Here, having ascended to the topmost storey, we entered the studio, which presented a rather remarkable appearance.

There were numbers of pictures, some with frames and some without, stacked against the walls; and rows of dusty shelves, with books, casts, and human bones heaped upon them.

In one corner was a life-sized model of Apollo, and in the corner, diagonally facing it, a complete skeleton suspended from hooks in the wall. This, being on the same side as the window, was barely distinguishable in the deep shadow, and presented a strange, spectre-like appearance.

The other corner, on the same side, was occupied by the artist's easel and canvas, behind which was a lay figure dressed in a complete suit of armour, and grasping in its extended fist a truncheon, reminding me of the ghost of Hamlet's father. In the remaining corner stood another lay figure, which was covered with a large mass of crimson drapery, apparently to protect it from the dust. All about the room, wherever space permitted, were piled fragments of old armour, with swords, pistols, halberts, and other weapons in picturesque disarray.

After showing me several of his paintings, which were not indeed works of very high merit, M. Verrier asked me if I would take a cup of coffee. I assented, and he rang a small handbell.

In response to the summons a young lady entered, bearing black coffee and cigarettes upon a small tray. A thrill of delightful surprise ran through me as I recognised in her the unknown one whose beauty had so profoundly impressed me on that memorable morning.

I trembled all over; I grew hot and cold by turns, and vainly endeavoured to suppress my agitation. Whether M. Verrier noticed my embarrassment or not I cannot say. To my great gratification he introduced me.

"Permit me," said he—"Monsieur Clayton, my daughter, Mademoiselle Annette Verrier."

I bowed, and the young lady returned my obeisance with consummate grace, blushing slightly as she did so. Then she withdrew, after handing us our coffee and cigarettes.

I prolonged my visit rather inordinately, in the hope that Mdlle. Verrier would reappear, but she did not, and I took my leave at length, resolved to use every means for becoming better acquainted with her.

One day I met M. Verrier in the café, as before, and our conversation happened to turn upon games. I mentioned that I was fond of *écarté*, and asked him if he ever played.

"Alas! not now, monsieur," replied he, "for you see I have to be at work every hour of the daylight;

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and my physician does not permit that I go out in the evening on account of my asthma, so I am obliged to give up my game."

"But surely, monsieur," said I, "your friends might play with you in your rooms?"

"I have no friends," said he, "who care to spend their time in amusing an old man. Ah, no! most persons can find more lively diversions than that. No matter; I must not complain, for I have a treasure indeed in the society of my beloved daughter."

I hinted pretty strongly that I at least would be only too happy to play with him.

"Well, then, monsieur," said he, "since you are so good as to say so, if you will name any evening that shall be agreeable to you, it will give me great pleasure to take a hand with you."

I suggested the same evening, at any hour he pleased.

"Shall we say nine o' clock then," said he. "And if you will do me the honour to sup with me?"

I accepted gladly, and overwhelmed him with a profusion of thanks. What happiness! I should see Annette—should converse with her, and should be able to strengthen the favourable impression I already believed myself to have made.

M. Verrier rose to leave the café, muttering in a half-audible tone as he did so: "I must remember to get some cards, for I have not a pack—so long since I have played!"

"Pray do not trouble yourself, monsieur," I exclaimed, "for, as it happens, I have two new packs at my hotel."

He thanked me and walked out. Just then the proprietor of the café, a fat jovial fellow, who had been removing some glasses near us during our conversation, turned to me with a smile:

"Monsieur must be rich to play with M. Verrier."

"Indeed?"

"Aye. For it is his humour to play high. Also it is his humour to win."

What did I care for that? Even if I lost a few louis, the interview with Annette would more than repay the sacrifice.

The time came, and on my arrival I was ushered by my host into a small and barely-furnished room, where a table was laid for two.

Our supper was very simple; it consisted of bread, cheese, and salad, with red wine. Annette attended upon us, mixing our salad and pouring out our wine.

She was paler than usual, and the absence of colour in her cheek rather served to heighten the indescribable air of *noblesse* that pervaded all her movements.

I now had to submit to a disappointment for which I had been wholly unprepared. Holding out her hand to me she wished me *bon soir*. She was going to retire for the rest of the evening.

It might have been partly owing to the wine, but I felt unusually bold, and as I took the lily hand in my own I pressed it to my lips.

"So kind of you," she murmured softly.

"She is an angel!" I said to myself, "an angel of gentleness and filial affection. She has no thought for herself; she only studies her father's happiness."

She turned to go and—I hardly knew how I nerved myself to say it—I wondered at my own temerity afterwards:

"You are quitting my sight, mademoiselle," I exclaimed, in impassioned tones, "but your image will remain enshrined in my heart for ever."

M. Verrier blew a long cloud of smoke from his lips as I uttered this speech. He was sitting with his head thrown back, gazing abstractedly at the ceiling, and he never changed his posture as his daughter retired from the room.

An interval of silence then ensued.

"Come, then, monsieur," said M. Verrier at length, "shall we play?"

I assented, and he led the way to the studio. Everything there was precisely as I had seen it on the previous occasion. M. Verrier motioned me to a chair, where I seated myself facing the easel, which was covered with a large white wrapper. Behind it loomed the mysterious figure in armour, while the Apollo was on my right and the skeleton on my left. M. Verrier now removed the wrapper from the easel, disclosing to my view an unfinished sketch, in oils, of his daughter Annette.

I have said that he was a painter of little ability, and the work before me was either by another hand, or the subject had inspired the artist to put forth unwonted power. It was true to the life.

As I gazed at the portrait, a few incoherent expressions of admiration broke from me. M. Verrier smiled, and drawing up a small table towards me, placed wine and glasses upon it, and took his seat facing me.

The game commenced; we played high, and I seemed to lose about three hundred francs in no time. I was a good player, but I did not pay sufficient attention to the cards, partly from a desire to indulge my opponent in his humour, but chiefly because my thoughts were running on Annette, and my eyes continually wandering to her portrait upon the easel.

M. Verrier gathered up my stake with the cool indifference of the veteran gamester.

"It is better to play thus than in company, where they bet upon the cards and advise you what to play, is it not, monsieur?" said he.

I expressed concurrence; but there was something in his tone that I did not like. It seemed to convey a covert sneer at my want of skill, and I determined to play my very best.

I now won a few games, and M. Verrier for the first time challenged me to bet. I did so, and lost heavily. The artist played as if he had known every card in my hand, a species of knowledge that is of transcendent value at *écarté*. I began to suspect that I was being made the victim of some trickery, though of what nature I could not guess. The cards I had brought with me, and it was therefore impossible that the backs could have been marked in any way. What was the secret of M. Verrier's success? I resolved to watch him, and, if possible, find out.

My hand consisted of the queen, eight, and seven of clubs, and the knave and nine of diamonds. In taking up these cards I had scarcely made a movement of the elbow, and yet I could see in the spectacle glasses of M. Verrier, the reflection of something in brisk motion behind my chair.

Angry and suspicious, and almost forgetting for the moment that the man before me was the father of Annette, I turned sharply round, and was just in time to catch sight of a human hand, holding five cards spread fan-wise, rapidly disappearing under the folds of the crimson drapery that covered the figure in the corner behind me. I had seen the faces of the cards. They were the queen, eight and seven of clubs, and the knave and nine of diamonds.

I roughly tore off the drapery, and disclosed to view, not a lay figure, but the majestic form of Mdlle. Annette Verrier, holding in her hand the cards with which she had been telegraphing. MARY BRYAN.

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A SERVICE OF LOVE.

IT was just dusk, and St. Petersburg was a blaze of light! This was the Tsar's birthday.

From a hundred steeples the high, clear bells rang out over the city a jangle of congratulations and joy to the Imperial chief, and it would seem that another year to the Tsar's life was a blessing for universal rejoicing. So it would seem from the crowds, and the fireworks, and the bells, but in the faces of knots of people gathered here and there the bitter truth could be read, only half suppressed. There was one in particular whose appearance attracted more attention and comment than he was aware of, or he might have lowered his eyes to hide their scorn when the Imperial party, surrounded by armed cavalry, moved slowly on to the palace.

He stood on the steps at the base of a monument, and with folded arms and knitted brow looked gloomily over the throng at the slow-moving pageant. His face was swarthy, the features well cut, the eyes bright, intellectual, and passionate; he was about medium height, broadly built, and looked not more than thirty-five or so, but his coarse, closely-cropped hair was white. He looked what he was—a man of wonderful determination, powerful energy, untiring purpose, strong passions, and with a strange history in the background.

As he stood there he made, unconsciously, a picture that the most idle and careless passer-by would have speculated about; his individuality was so great he did not even lose it in a crowd. What problem was he trying to solve? A knotted one, truly—the problem of the wretched lives passed by the poor people of his native land! Was the light ever coming? Ah, the night was still dark, with no streaks on the horizon giving promise of a glorious dawn. He shuddered at his own thoughts—for himself he felt no fear, but for the cause to which he had given the best years of his life, and in which he had centred every hope that dared to quiver in a heart, he had long since believed hopeless!

"Karamsin, Karamsin, come down! Don't you see that the people are moving away?" asked a young man, gaining his side and speaking in a cheery voice. "Come down from your pedestal. You look like Alexander sighing for more worlds to conquer."

Karamsin looked up abstractedly, and saw that the crowds were pressing on after the lights and music afar ahead. He looked for a moment up into the darkening sky before moving towards the quieter squares.

"Are you praying, Karamsin?" asked his companion, with a short laugh. "Our work needs no prayer. We can get along without heaven."

"You blame heaven? The fault is of the earth."

"Heaven appointed kings to crush the populace, and made the extremes of poverty and wealth."

"Hush, Sergius, I hate to hear you talk like that! You are too young to be so bitter. Heaven made kings, but their own sin made them tyrants. God is just, it is said. All we want is justice."

"Yes," said the other, with a sneer on his boyish face, "and we must take it, right or wrong, if it entails every sin in the Decalogue."

This conversation was carried on in earnest whispers as they walked rapidly along, and Karamsin's face was pale with suffering.

"You go to Kamenka to-night?" asked Sergius.

"To-night. I leave the work here under your directions and that of the Countess Sumaroff."

"You place a great deal of faith in her. You see a great deal of her," said Sergius thoughtfully. "I cannot help thinking of your superstition—that women were fatal to the men of your race. Are you not afraid, or do you ever think of that now?"

Karamsin's dark cheek flushed and a deeper gloom settled on his face.

"I can never forget. To women I owe every misfortune I have met with. But while I stay a friend, I am safe. I will never love again. That is past. My heart is a veritable cinder."

"Oh, then it is only friendship you feel for the beautiful Countess?" asked the other drily.

"That is all."

They had reached a house in a quiet street, with a

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small paved court in front of it. The first floor appeared to be a shop, in whose windows a gunsmith's stock was displayed, although the doors were closed and shuttered, owing to the holiday. Here they separated, and Karamsin entered the house. At the back of the supposed gun shop were two or three rooms barely furnished, and not even the neighbours knew that here were held some of the most formidable Nihilistic meetings in all Russia, so secretly were they conducted. Karamsin only glanced round and mounted to the floor above.

The rooms here were more comfortably furnished, one in particular, overlooking the street, gave evidence of a refined taste, for the curtains at the windows were rich and subdued in colours, a wood fire burnt on the hearth, with a bear skin stretched before it, and two tall silver candlesticks holding newly-lighted candles were standing on the table, where dinner was laid for one.

A middle-aged serving woman entered with the dinner on a tray, and waited humbly for a greeting.

"Did anyone call while I was out, Catharine?" he asked.

"One gentleman, master. He wanted to see some guns. I told him he must come to-morrow, as this was a holiday. He was very impatient, and I could scarcely prevent him from coming up to wait for you."

Karamsin leant forward, an excited glow in his dark eyes, his long brown hands clenched fiercely.

"Ah—ah! And what did this strange, impatient man look like? Describe him."

The woman paused thoughtfully.

"He was very stout—thick—short. A bullet black head and long moustache."

"Small eyes?" questioned Karamsin eagerly.

"Yes, and a loud voice—oh, a very loud, master."

"I know him. Thank you. That will do. I am going away to-night," he said, after drinking a glass of wine, "and I want you to pack me a few changes of linen. I must be off at once."

When he was again alone he began to pace the room excitedly.

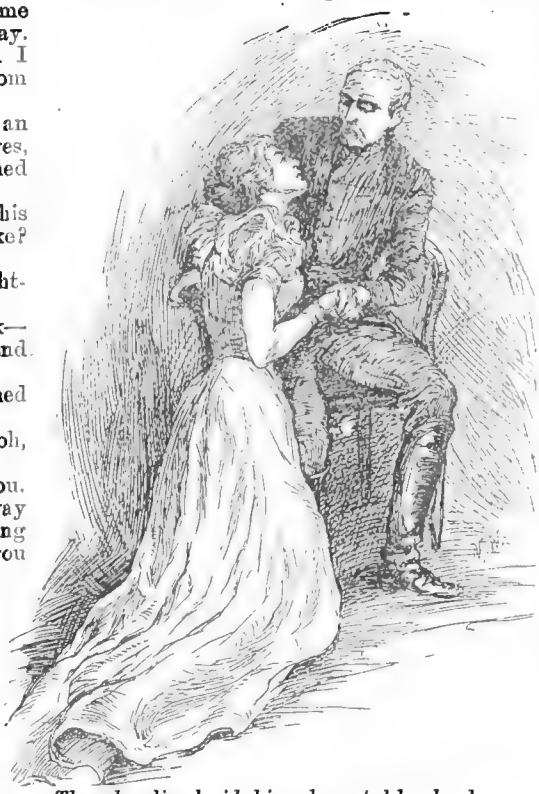
"It has come at last," he thought. "The investigation is a matter of time now, for General Letraski is a blood-hound. I must be careful; very, very careful. Am I guilty? Is it treason to labour for equity and justice, to follow only the laws of pure humanity? Yet according to the last imperial decree I can be exiled to Siberia for this offence. But I cannot wait and face it all. Everything depends on my presence in Kamenka to-morrow, for if I fail and the people once lose faith in me my hold on them will be destroyed—yes, I must go!"

The clock struck nine and Karamsin shook off his thoughtful mood. He took from a small drawer in a cabinet a package of papers, tied with a stout string. If found they would convict him hopelessly, but, if destroyed, there was comparatively small chance of his defeat, so well arranged were all his plans and schemes. The most important item in his life was that package of papers. He wanted to be rid of it, for it was dangerous; he wanted to keep it, for it was valuable. Better to be on the safe side. Any hour, any moment, might see him in a difficult position, and the possession of these papers meant a sentence to something infinitely worse than death.

He knelt down before the fire and untied one knot of the string, when he lifted his head suddenly and listened intently. Wait—something was astir! He heard a sound in the silent house which drove the blood in torrents to his heart, until it seemed that it would fail under the rapid, excited rush. It was a woman's soft, musical voice, and one he knew well.

Staggering to his feet he threw the package on the table, but did not notice that it fell beside another which contained only an account of insignificant business details.

With fixed eyes he watched the door, waiting for an explanation of the voice. After a moment, which seemed interminable, the *portière* was drawn aside by a white hand, and a woman's face appeared at the opening. She entered and crossed rapidly and silently to his side, holding out both her hands. Karamsin looked at her, and all his heart was in his eyes. If he ever doubted before that he loved her he knew the truth now.



Then, kneeling beside him, she rested her head against his shoulder.

Now—when she had risked compromising herself, when her lovely face was white and drawn with pain, and her long, white-lidded dark blue eyes, heavy with passionate sorrow, fell under his gaze. With gentle fingers he unfastened the long fur cloak which covered her, and saw that she was in a court ball dress of white, clinging crêpe, diamonds at her throat and wrists and hair. She was as beautiful as a dream, and the magnetism of her presence thrilled through him with bewildering sweetness and confusion. Laying her hand on his arm, she pushed him gently into a chair, then kneeling beside him, rested her head against his shoulder.

"Do you despise me for coming?" Countess Zumaroff asked in a voice that was broken and very wistful. "It ——"

"My dear Countess," interrupted Karamsin earnestly, lifting her hand and kissing it reverently, "you can never be aught to me but the best and most beautiful of women. I do not question what has brought you here to-night. The reason, I know, will be sufficiently strong to outbalance the imprudence."

The woman beside him thrilled under his words and glance, but she was ill at ease and the colour came and went in her face painfully.

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At last, with sudden strength, she met his eyes steadily.

"I came to say good-bye to you. That was all. I had to come," she said rapidly. "I knew you were going away on a dangerous journey—even more dangerous than you think—and I have overcome every obstacle to see you once before you go!"

The rest of the story was told in her face—in the languid, beseeching eyes and tremulous mouth.

Her face was dangerously near—he loved her—love looked from her eyes to his. Karamsin forgot everything, and, lowering his face, as if drawn down by a spell, he kissed her on the mouth.

"And do you love me? I never dreamt it," he whispered. "And yet your love, coming at this time, gives me no happiness, although I love you with my whole heart. It seems a strange thing to say, but my heart is the heavier for it, and I feel on the brink of a tragedy."

"But we Russians mingle sadness with everything," she said, smiling in his face. "We are sad in our poetry, in our music; we take life *au grand sérieux*. But we are saddest of all in our loves, when we love truly. A German writer has said of our songs that they are 'the sorrows of whole centuries blended in one everlasting sigh.'"

"You are so different from other women I have known—will you be the same?" He paused and looked at the clock. It was after ten, and long past the time when he should have started on his journey.

"My blessing or my curse?" he said aloud, but speaking to himself. He said no more—the words froze on his lips—the Countess' eyes looked into his in silent, questioning horror. There were footsteps in the quiet street—not the footsteps of one man, but of a number, and the authoritative knock sounded on the street door. In that moment of terror, scarcely knowing what she did, the Countess blew out both candles, and the room was lit only by the firelight.

Karamsin drew aside the hangings, which covered a deep recess in the room, and beckoned to her to hide behind them.

"Let nothing tempt you to betray yourself," he whispered. There was another knock at the door, which made the house shake, and Catharine came into the room in *deshabillée*, her old face pale and scared.

"Master, what shall I do?"

"Open the door, of course," he replied coolly.

She went away, her teeth chattering with nervousness, and in that instant he remembered the papers. It was too late to burn them. What should he do? The men were in the hall. He must go down and detain them for a few moments.

"Countess," he whispered from the door, "take the package of papers from the table and hide them in your bosom. Quick! I will detain them below."

Countess Zumaroff stepped out.

She darted out, picked up the package, which the uncertain firelight showed her, and was back in a second, pressing it down on her heart. She heard Karamsin descend the stairs and his clear, composed voice ask the meaning of the intrusion.

"We want to see you," was the curt answer, and she recognised General Letraski's voice.

"If it is a matter of business," replied Karamsin, "it can be conducted best in my store. Will you follow me?"

"One moment, my friend. The matter in hand has nothing to do with guns—unless you drive us to an extremity—and we prefer to make ourselves at home. Let us be comfortable at all hazards."

In another moment they entered the room where the Countess was concealed. There were four of them—the Chief of Police, two of his assistants, and Letraski. The candles were relit, and Letraski's quick eye fell at once on the papers lying on the table. He picked them up, while Karamsin turned ashy pale, though retaining his composure. Had not the Countess secreted the papers, or were there two packages? With those papers in Letraski's possession and he aware of their contents all was lost. The string had not yet been untied, and Karamsin held out his hand.

"General Letraski, those papers have no interest for you at all. Give them to me, if you please!"

But Letraski had noticed the pallour of his face and drawn his own conclusions.

"If they prove to be a will, a bundle of love-letters, or original poetry, I will return them at once," said Letraski jestingly, with his eyeglass raised. "You do not object to my glancing at them?"

"I do most emphatically object! You are at liberty to ask for an interview, and I am disposed to grant it, but the examination of my private papers is a different matter!"

"Chief, show your warrant!" said Letraski shortly. "Ah! You see I can examine every crevice in your room, open every drawer and box! Now, don't get excited! Will you kindly stand round him, my men, while I examine these documents."

It was a terrible pause as Letraski read on with ominously drawn brows, and at last he spoke:

"Arrest him! Karamsin, you are a Nihilist! You are the head of the Nihilists! Arrest him, my men, in the name of the Tsar!"

The words had scarcely left his lips when the *portière* was drawn aside and the Countess Zumaroff stepped out, with terrible anguish marking her beautiful face. Letraski could scarcely believe his eyes! She loved Karamsin—she, the acknowledged beauty of the Court! Who would have guessed it?

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What a scandal this would be for Russia's nobility to lift its brows over!

With a long, imploring gaze she laid her hand on Letraski's arm. For a moment she could not speak, and he waited considerately until she recovered her composure somewhat.

"Letraski, we have been friends for years. My husband, until his death, was your faithful friend. You are a gentleman, and I am sure you have a heart! Will you grant me one request?"

"If I can. If it does not involve treason, Countess. I am in the service of the Tsar," he replied, with unusual gentleness.

"But it does involve what you call treason," she said with fierce earnestness, "and it saves the man I love from a terrible fate, me from disgrace and extinction! Look you, if you burn those papers before my eyes and promise me, all of you, never to reveal the incidents of this night, I will divide amongst you my whole fortune—every rouble! Leave us poor, but free! We will go away to some other land and live or die together!"

Karamsin's heart bled to see her there, pleading for him. Letraski was moved, too, but replied without hesitation:

"Countess, what you say is madness! I cannot do it. Do not cling to me so; do not make it so hard to refuse you! Your name will not be mentioned, have no fear of that. But the prisoner and papers belong to the Government."

"If there is any guilt, it is mine as much as his! Tell him, Karamsin, that I have been your ally in everything. I will go with you!"

"Women are the playthings of the devil!" said Letraski impatiently. "I can in no other way explain the extraordinary positions in which they manage to place themselves."

"This woman is an angel," said Karamsin, as his miserable eyes rested on her white face.

She looked up wearily and met that gaze.

"You can still say that? Although it was my visit which prevented you from undertaking the journey that would have saved you, and though, in my haste, I secreted the wrong papers! You are more than generous!"

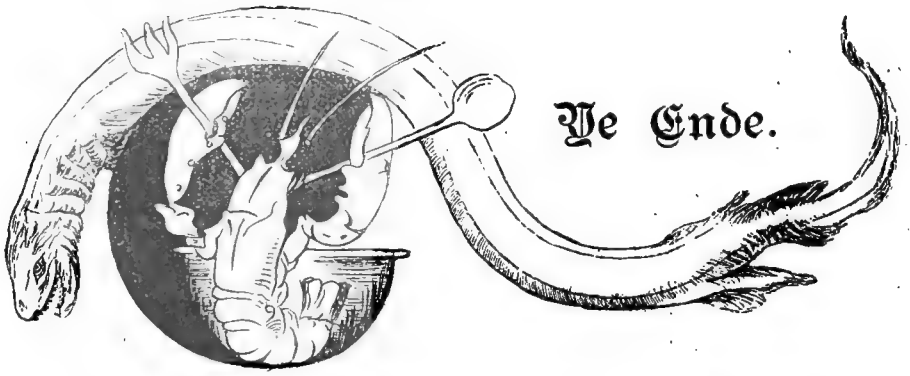
No pleading came to her lips now! Instead, there was utter hopelessness in her attitude and words.

"Do you remember telling me once that women were fatal to men of your race? How I pitied you that day! I have been fatal to you! Oh, God—see, your last, crowning wretchedness—your death, or the long Siberian exile, worse than death, has come to you through a woman—who—who loved you too well to live, remembering that she killed you, when she would have suffered anything to save you."

Buried it in her heart.

These were the last words she spoke. Before one of the men guessed her motive she had taken swiftly from the folds of her dress a long, narrow dagger, and tearing apart the gauze covering her bosom, buried it in her heart. Karamsin's passionate kisses could not check the soul's flight. The beautiful lips froze into the set lines of death even as he kissed them. He looked down at her in heart-broken silence—dead at his feet, a sacrifice to the fatality which had ever followed him.

E. GARNET.



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LEGENDS OF WOLFVILLE.

BY "DAN QUINN."

Wolfville is a Cattleman's Settlement in Arizona, and the Characters in these Legends are Cowboys.

No. 4.—The Suicide of Pickles.

THE old cattleman leant back in his chair and poised between scornful fingers the last chapter of a cigar.

"No, son, I never did no killin' myself, but I've stood roundand seed folks get checked clear through, which is more profitable. I calls to mind a killin' down to old Ike Stockton's.

"There was a big crowd at Stockton's that June day. The corrals was full of packmules, an' bull teams, an' waggon trains from the East, an' white men, Mexicans, half-breeds, an' Injuns was a-mixin' an' meanderin' round, a-lyin' an' a-laughin', an' a-drinkin' old Ike's whiskey mighty profuse.

"Four or five mule-skinners had their long, limber sixteen-foot whips, which are loaded with dust shot from butt to tip, an' was a crackin' of 'em at a mark. I've seen one of 'em, with the most easy, delicate, deliberate twist of the wrist, make his whip squirm in the air like a hurt snake, an' all at wonst straighten it out with the crack of twenty rifles, an' the buckskin popper would cut a hole in a loose buffalo robe he'd hung up, an' all without even investin' two ounces of actooal strength. Several of us was a-lookin' on from the hotel porch, applaudin' of the good shots, when Short Creek Dave speaks up to Jack Moore next to me an' says:

"'Jack, you mind that old Navajo you downed over on the San Simon last fall?'

"'I minds it mighty clear,' says Jack. 'He was a-stealin' my hoss at the time, an' I kin prove it by his skelp on my bridle right now.'

"'Well,' says Short Creek Dave, point'n' to a dirty saddle-coloured halfbreed who was makin' himself pretty numerous, 'that feller they calls Pickles is his nephfy, an' you wants to look a whole lot, for I've heard him allow that the killin' of his uncle was mighty rank, an' he didn't like it no how.'

"'That's all right,' says Jack, 'Pickles an' me has been watchin' each other for an hour, an' I'll tell you alls private, if he goes to play hoss a little bit, he an' his uncle will be able to talk things before night.'

"Bimeby Pickles comes along where we are.

"'Hellow Jack,' he says, 'been makin' it smoky down in the San Simon lately?'

"'No, not since last fall,' says Jack, 'an' now I thinks of it, I see that old Navajo hoss thief of an uncle of yours when I was down there last. I ain't met him lately though. Where do you reckon he's done loped to?'

"'Can't say myself,' says Pickles, with a wicked cheerfulness, 'our family had a reunion over on Bear Creek last spring, an' I couldn't count his nose among 'em no how. Mebby he had an engagement an' couldn't git there. Mebby he's out sloshin' 'round in the high grass some'ers now. Great man to go 'round permiscus, that Injun was.'

"'You see,' says Jack, 'I didn't know but he might be dead, because the time I was 'ludin' to I was settin' in camp one day an' happens to look up, an' thar was my hoss, Alazan, with a perfect stranger on him. Alazan was a-pitchin' an' a-buckin' an' a-cavortin' quite frightful, an' looked like he was goin' to cripple that stranger shore. Well, you know me. I'd rather lose two horses than have a man I didn't know git hurt, so I grabs my Winchester an' allows to kill Alazan.

"'But it was a new gun, an' you know what new sights is—coarse as sandburrs—an' I holds too high, an' I ketches the stranger, bang! right back of his left y'ear, an' the bullet comes outen his right y'ear. I never was so displeased with my shootin' for ten years. The idea of me holdin' four foot too high in a hundred yards. I was so plumb disgusted an' 'shamed I never went near the stranger till after I'd finished my grub.

"'Alazan, he came up all shiverin' an' sweatin', an' stood there, an' in an hour or so I walked out to the remains, an' when I seed 'em they was nuthin' but an old digger Injun. You kin drink on it, I was relieved. Bein' a no account Injun, of course, I didn't paw him over much for brands, but it struck me at the time it was mighty likely to be your uncle. This old cuss' skelp is over on my bridle, if you think you'd know it!'

"'Oh, no,' says Pickles, mighty onconsarned, 'it couldn't be my uncle, no how. If it was one of my family it would have been your ha'r on his bridle, so it must have been some old shorthorn of a Mohave you seed. Well, let's all take a drink on it.'

"So we all went in for our whiskey, Jack and Pickles watchin' each other mighty close, an' all the rest of us on the keevee, as the French say, to hop outen range if they took to shootin'.

"'Well,' says Pickles, as he secreted his nose paint, 'I must saddle and git out of here. I want to see Enright, an' I don't reckon I'll find the old Pinto this side o' Prescott, either. When do you think you'll leave yourself, Jack?'

"'I don't put it up I'll leave for a long time,' says Jack, 'mebby not for a month, so don't go to makin' any friendly wait for me nowhar on the trail, Pickles, 'cause you'd most likely run out of water or somethin' before I got along.'

"Bimeby, Pickles, he gets saddled up an' comes chargin' 'round on his little buckskin hoss, cuttin' all manner of tricks, reachin' for things on the ground, snatchin' off Mexicans' hats, an' jumpin' his pony over

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waggon-tongues, an' camp fixin's, all the time a-whoopin' an' yellin', an' havin' a high old time all by himself. You could see he was a-gettin' up his blood an' nerve reg'lar Injun fashion.

"Pretty soon he takes down his rope an' goes to whirlin' that. Two or three times he comes flashin' by whar we were, an' I look for to see him make a try for Jack.

"But he was too far back, or too many 'round him, or Pickles couldn't get his hoss' step, or somethin'; for he didn't throw it out, but just kept yellin' an' ridin' louder an' faster every minute. About this time Stockton came out from his bar-room.

"'Look here, Pickles,' he says, 'I've jest told three of my men to shoot you up a whole lot if you go to pitch that rope jest once; an' they're goin' to do it. Bein' as the news concarned you personal, I allowed it wasn't nothin' more than friendly to tell you. Then agin I don't like to lose a good customer like you till I has to, no how.'

"So old Ike he goes back to his bar-room, an' Pickles gits down an' leaves his hoss standin' an' comes back up to the porch.

"'Do you know, Jack,' he says, 'I don't like the onrespeckful way you talks of Injuns. I'm Injun part myself an' I don't like it.'

"'No?' says Jack, 'I s'pose that's a fact, too. An' yet, Pickles, not intendin' nothin' personal at all, for I wouldn't be personal with a horned toad, I'm not only onrespeckful of an Injun, an' thinks the Guv'ment oughter pay a bounty for their skelps, but I states a belief that a mean, crnery, mud-blooded, sneakin', hoss-stealin' mongrel of a half-breed is lower yet, I holdin' he ain't even people, ain't nothin', in fact. But to change the subjeck, as well as open an avenoo for another round of drinks, I'll bet you, Pickles, you stole that hoss down thar, an' that the "7 K" brand on his shoulder ain't no brand at all, but jest picked on thar with the point of a knife.'

"When Jack puts it all over Pickles this way we l oked for some shootin' shore. But Pickles couldn't steady himself on the pinch. He was jest like lots of ponies I've seed. He'd ride right at a thing as though he was goin' clean through or over, an' jest the last second he'd shy, an' flinch, an' weaken. The fact is, son, it wasn't Pickles' fault. There ain't any breed of man on earth but the pure white as will play a desperate deal clean through an' call the turn for life or death at the close; an', of course, Pickles was only half white. So he laughed kind of ugly at Jack's bluff, an' 'lowed he'd order drinks without no bettin'.

"'An' then, Jack,' he says to him, 'I want you to take dinner with me. I'll have Ike git us up somethin' right away now.'

"'I'll go you,' says Jack, all cheerful enough, 'whatever it be.'

"'I'll fix you people up a feed,' says old Ike, 'but you can't do your feedin' in no dinin'-room of mine. I'll fix it over in the camp house, t'other side of the corral, an' you kin be jest as sociable as you please. There won't be nuthin' nor nobody for you to hurt or disturb over there.'

"After a little their grub was got ready in the camp house, an' Jack an' Pickles walks over side an' side. They goes in an' shuts the door, an' in about five minutes bang! bang! goes two six-shooters, an' we all canters over, an' finds Jack eatin' away all right, an' Pickles over the other side with his head in his tin plate, clear stark dead.

"'It don't look like Pickles was hungry arter after all,' says Jack.

"They'd been pulled their guns as they sat down an' put 'em in their laps, but jest as I say, Pickles couldn't stand the pressure, an' gittin' nervous he grabbed for his gun, an' as he went to git it up the muzzle caught under the table top an' thar his bullet was all safe in the wood. Jack bein' clean strain had better luck.

"Finally Cherokee Hall gits up an' says: 'This here killin' was all right, but there bein' some present difficulty of givin' the reasons why it's all right, an', owin', as we do a dooty to the public, I moves you that our verdict be 'justified homicide' based on the ground that Pickles commits suicide.'

"This was good enough. Of course, Pickles didn't commit suicide none, but that didn't hurt it for a reason jest the same."

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SELF ACCUSED.

A GOOD many years ago now I had occasion to visit Holyhead, on business, which I understood from my employer, a land and estate agent, would probably necessitate my staying there for the night. So I merely took with me a small portmanteau containing a few necessaries; but shortly after my arrival I learnt that the business I had come to settle had been unavoidably postponed for a day or two, and it would probably be the end of the week before I should be able to get away.

The prospect of a brief holiday was not by any means distasteful to me, but not having brought much money with me I did not feel justified in going to the expense of putting up at an hotel, and so took a look round with a view to finding cheap apartments where, on explaining the circumstances of my having practically no luggage with me, I could find accommodation at a considerably cheaper rate than in an hotel.

I had not gone far from the station when I came upon a row of small residences that might best be described as an admixture between small villas and artisans' cottages, and in the window of one of them I saw the announcement of a combined bed and sitting room to let.

"The very thing," I said to myself, and promptly knocked at the door, which was opened by a respectable looking woman rejoicing, as I afterwards discovered, in the name of Roberts, to whom I explained the state of affairs; and that, although my stay might not be prolonged beyond a few days, it might extend to a week, and if she could very kindly take me in I should be exceedingly obliged to her.

This she good-naturedly consented to do, and in a few minutes I had arranged as to terms, which were exceedingly moderate, and had taken possession of the rooms allotted to me.

"I dare say you'd be liking something to eat, sir, after your journey?"

"I should indeed, Mrs. Roberts, if you could manage it," I replied.

"Well, I have not got anything in the house, but I'll run out, and it shall be ready in less than an hour."

Left to myself I took stock of my surroundings, and then sat down to run my eye over a story I had been writing, the finishing touches to which I had put in the train to while away the time on my long journey up North. I was soon busily engaged in making a few corrections and alterations, reading the story out loud to myself, as has always been my habit, to see how it sounded.

I had become so engrossed in my occupation that I did not notice the door open, and when Mrs. Roberts said: "Your tea is ready, sir," without thinking what I was saying, I replied: "John Wilson, at your service, madam," that being the sentence in my story I was just in the middle of. And then, realising where I was, I said: "Thanks, Mrs. Roberts, I am very much obliged to you for taking so much trouble."

"It's no trouble, sir. People who let rooms must do their best to make their lodgers comfortable, I always say. I hope you will find the steak tender, and if you want anything, Mr. Wilson, the bell is close to you," and before I could reply the old lady had gone out and closed the door.

"Wilson!" I said to myself. "Oh, of course, she thought I meant my own name just now," and I laughed at the stupid mistake I had made. "After all, what does it matter, it's only for a day or two, and so there is no need to undeceive her."

Being tired, I went to bed early, and as the next morning was wet, I determined to stay in for an hour or two and finish off my story, whilst I had the leisure to do so quietly.

There was one portion of it, the confession of a murder, which did not altogether satisfy me; it hardly seemed feasible somehow, in the way I had written it, and I determined to do it over again. This did not, however, prove so easy as I had anticipated, and I wrote and rewrote a page or two twice over, before I was satisfied that I had made it as true to life as possible.

The second attempt was certainly better than the first, and both were better than the original, which I destroyed, using one of the other two and keeping the second in case I should see my way to improve upon it later on.

Not that I felt very confident of being able to do so, and as a matter of fact, I neatly tied up the sheets of the story, as written, and having indited a short note to

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the editor of a London journal to whom I intended to submit my literary effort, put the whole into an envelope, and addressed it, saying to myself, as I placed it on the mantelpiece, I would post it the next day, if no further inspiration came to me in the interval.

With a feeling of relief at having finally accomplished what had taken me a good many hours to do at various odd times, and the rain having left off, I made up my mind to have a look round the town and see what there was to be done in the way of amusing myself during the next few days.

To a stranger, without any friends, or even acquaintances, a provincial town, unlike London, where there is always something going on, does not possess any very attractive features; and I was thinking of falling back upon the ever welcome amusement of a game of billiards, when it suddenly occurred to me that the Irish mail started from Holyhead: and simultaneously the thought suggested itself to my mind that a trip to Dublin by the mail boat would not be at all a bad idea, and I strolled down to the pier to ascertain the time of departure.

The night boat, I found, left at midnight, and if I went by that I should be in Dublin early in the morning, have a day there, and be able to return the same evening; an arrangement which would suit me in every way.

On going back to the house where I was staying, I found Mrs. Roberts had been suddenly called away to see a sick relative, and would not be back until the next day, a neighbour having undertaken to sleep in the house during her absence. Not wishing to give any unnecessary trouble, I said at once I would get some dinner at one of the hotels, and as it happened I had made up my mind to run over to Dublin and should not return until the following night, so that she need not distress herself on my account.

She was profuse in her thanks, and evidently much relieved at not having to minister to my wants and necessities.

"What time shall I tell Mrs. Roberts to expect you back, sir?" were her parting words, and I remember saying in reply, with a laugh. "Oh, sometime or other to-morrow evening; but she had better not expect me till she sees me," meaning to imply that she was not to bother about making any preparation for me. As it happened, however, my harmless remark was taken in a very different sense to what I had intended it to be.

Dinner over, for want of something better to do I strolled down to the pier again, and on finding that a steamer would start almost immediately for the Isle of Man, I decided on making the trip there, instead of to Dublin as I had intended; one place was as new to me as the other, and all I wanted was a short trip somewhere.

In due course I arrived at my destination, and, having secured a bed for the night, I made inquiries as to how I could return to Holyhead on the following day, only to find that the steamer ran but once a week, and that I should have to go back to Liverpool and thence on by train. This did not matter so very much. I argued to myself, as a day in Liverpool would be a pleasant addition to the outing.

I retired to bed early, giving orders to be called at eight o'clock the next morning.

"It can't be seven o'clock yet," I said to myself, as a knock at the door awakened me out of a very comfortable morning sleep, when, to my surprise, the door opened, and not the boots whom I had instructed to call me, but two men, one of them bearing an official-looking document in his hand, made their appearance.

"The game's up, Mr. Wilson," he said, "it's best to take things quietly. I hold here a warrant for your arrest on the charge of wilful murder."

"Wilson! Murder! What on earth do you mean?"

"The less you say the better, if you take my advice. My information is that you have been staying at Holyhead, at the house of a Mrs. Roberts," referring to a telegram he held in his hand, "and that you announced yesterday afternoon that you were going to Dublin by the night mail."

"That is quite correct," I interposed.

"Oh, you admit that?"

"Of course I do, I meant——"

"Best not to say too much, Mr. Wilson."

"But my name is not Wilson at all, that's where you are mistaken."

"It says in this telegram, 'gave the name of John Wilson.'"

In an instant the truth flashed upon me, and I inwardly cursed myself for my stupidity in not explaining the slip of the tongue I had unconsciously committed to Mrs. Roberts; and then the murder! why, of course, the villain in my story was called John Wilson, and the woman in charge must have come across one of the discarded sheets on which I had written out the fellow's confession, imagined it was real—as if any sane man would have left lying about such incriminating evidence—had given information to the local police, and there you are!

All this passed through my mind in much less time than it has taken me to write it down, and I could not resist bursting out laughing.

"This is no laughing matter, I can tell you," said the detective, for such he was, I discovered. "I shall be obliged if you will be good enough to dress yourself with as little delay as possible. My instructions are to convey you to Holyhead with all practicable dispatch, and as the steamer for Liverpool starts in less than half an hour, and I have a cab in readiness, we can just do it if you will be good enough to hurry yourself a little."

There was something in the man's manner that seemed to imply he was not in the mood for standing nonsense, and I realised that he would probably not give credence to my explanation, even were I to tender it, for I had not a shred of evidence to support it; and there was the fact, easily explainable of course under ordinary circumstances, that I had given out I was going to Dublin, and here I was in the Isle of Man.

The only thing to be done was to get back to Holy-

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head as soon as possible, when the mystery would be at once cleared up. I congratulated myself now that I had not, as I intended, posted the MS. before I came away.

The return journey was anything but a pleasant one. The two officers were constrained in their manner and conversation, and it was with a genuine feeling of relief that I at length reached my destination.

"And now, gentlemen, when we alight, if you will allow me to go with you to Mrs. Roberts' house, I can, I think, clear up this matter to our mutual satisfaction."

One or two members of the local force were awaiting my arrival, and on the platform, in close proximity to a constable, was the woman who had been deputed as caretaker by Mrs. Roberts.

"That's him, Thomas," she said excitedly, turning to the constable (her husband as I afterwards discovered), "I could swear to him amongst a thousand."

The man addressed seemed to visibly swell with importance.

Just at that moment a superintendent stepped forward.

"You got my wire in time, I see."

"Yes, sir; the prisoner says if he can be allowed access to the room he occupied at Mrs. Roberts' he will be able to explain things. I suppose there will be no objection to his doing so—under escort, of course."

"I see no reason why he should not. I myself will accompany you."

The four of us were soon in a cab, and in a few minutes the driver had stopped at Mrs. Roberts' door, which was opened by that worthy individual herself.

"Dear, dear, only to think that I should have harboured such a villain! Why, I might have been murdered in my bed."

"Not quite so bad as that, Mrs. Roberts, I hope," I said cheerfully, at the same time entering the house, one of the officers preceeding me and the other two bringing up the rear.

"Into the parlour, please—and now, gentlemen, I think I can explain."

I looked at the mantelpiece. Good Heavens! the packet was not where I had left it. Things were assuming an awkward turn.

"The papers I left on the mantelpiece, Mrs. Roberts," I managed to gasp out.

"Do you mean the envelope, sir?" she inquired.

"Yes, yes, a long blue one."

"The lady as kindly took charge of the 'ouse for me, seeing as it was stamped, ready for post, thought it best to send it off, thinking as 'ow you 'ad forgotten it."

"Well, sir, what explanation have you to offer now you *have* brought us here?" asked the superintendent sarcastically.

I briefly told him the facts of the case, but I saw he did not believe me for all that.

"A very improbable story," was his dry comment.

"Well, at any rate you will do me the justice of wiring to the editor in London to see whether what I have said is true or not."

"Yes, we can do that, of course, but——"

He did not conclude the sentence, and I could see he did not believe a word I had said, and I was forthwith escorted to the Town Hall and placed under careful supervision.

* * * * *

Of course, a reply was received in due course, and the next morning my luckless story came back by post, and I was speedily released from custody. But it taught me a lesson not to leave my writings about.

It seems on going into the room after I had left, the constable's wife happened to pick up the sheet of paper on which I had written, and which I had thrown aside as not being thrilling enough, the confession of murder of a man unknown, by the villain of my story—John Wilson—and had conveyed the astounding information to her husband, who thought he had lighted upon a mystery, the unravelment of which would not only redound to his credit, but probably result in his speedy promotion. And really, when I read it over afterwards, it was so graphically written (excuse the egotism, please) that his being taken in by it was perfectly excusable.

How he watched to see if I did really go by the Dublin boat, and when he found I did not, set to and made inquiries, with the result that he speedily discovered that, as he feared, I had given him the slip, and how he promptly wired to the Isle of Man authorities to look out for and arrest me, he told me afterwards, in confidence, and not without a sigh of regret at the downfall of his hopes of promotion.

S. J. F. Newbery.

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Love's Mad Heroism.

Al-Araf, the singular name which my friend Sidney Acton had chosen for his estate, a charming property overlooking the Conestoga, near the railway bridge, had always been a mystery to me. I had a notion of the meaning of the phrase, but how it came to be applied to a pretty modern villa, surrounded by tasteful grounds, and occupied by a respectable gentleman and his lovely wife, was a problem I could not solve.

After turning the matter over in my mind for a considerable time without any light, I ventured to ask my host for an explanation, during a visit to the place.

"Is it possible that you have never heard the story?" he said with a smile. "It is incredible, considering how fond I am of relating it to anyone who will listen. Well, in that case, if you will come with me to the brow of the hill opposite the bridge, you shall have the advantage of hearing the drama on the scene of its occurrence, from the mouth of one of the principal actors."

I followed him to the spot indicated, where we seated ourselves upon a rustic bench beneath a clump of sycamores.

"In the first place," he began, "you are aware that Al-Araf is the name the Mohammedans give to their purgatory—a sort of half-way house for departed spirits midway between heaven and hell. Into the latter, a gloomy pit, whence arise continually thunders and roarings like the voice of a thousand waterfalls, the condemned soul is sent with a plunge. Into the other, the true believer is led across a bridge no wider than a hair. You shall presently decide for yourself whether the name I have given to my estate, commemorative of my experience, is apt or not.

"The river at this point, as you perceive, is compressed into a swift, turbid stream, not more than five hundred yards in width, between two steep walls of rock over three hundred feet in height. The bridge, an iron structure supported by two brick piers, springs from the bluffs on either side of the stream where it is narrower. You may discern a little below the roadbed three lines, looking from this point like fine spiders' webs. They are the telegraph wires of the company, resting upon the projecting buttresses of the piers. How would you like attempting to enter heaven over such a bridge as these would make, knowing that the chances were ten to one in favour of your plunging headlong into the whirling water below? Well, if a woman's love be heaven, as the poets tell us it is, I have made my way to it over that very bridge.

"I was an ambitious young lawyer at the period I am speaking of, and as hard a worker as ever entered a plea. Although worn out with the long winter's labour, I gave myself no rest until late in the season. Then I consented to take two weeks' vacation, and came down to spend it at the hotel whose gables you can see through the trees on the opposite bank of the river.

"Most of the guests had already departed, for the cold September storms had set in, and the nights were sharp and blustery; but there was one person remaining whose society proved an ample substitute for the whole gay crowd of pleasure seekers. Need I say it was a lady?

"I thought her then the sweetest woman that ever blessed the sight of man. It must have been right, because my opinion has undergone no change to this day. Young, ardent, and, despite my legal training, inexperienced, I fell madly in love with her at first sight, and made not the slightest attempt to disguise it.

"Nevertheless, I made little or no visible progress with her. She evidently liked me as a friend; she was gentle and gracious, but nothing more. Of course, had I been in a cooler frame of mind I should have understood that under the most favourable circumstances I could expect nothing more after a ten days' acquaintance. But those ten days were to me ten long years of delicious hope and desperate despondency, alternate every half hour of the day and night.

"Sometimes, when she would suddenly raise her eyes and detect my own fixed upon her with a yearning intensity, she would flush slightly and her voice would tremble. Then my heart would cry out exultantly: 'She loves me.' Again it would occur to me that no woman, however cold, could witness the signs of a man's passion for her without some confusion. Then I would curse my own mad folly and drop miles deep into the pit of despair.

"So matters ran on until the end of the fortnight, when one rainy afternoon, as we sat in the porch together, she told me that she was to return to town on the following morning. If she had read my own death warrant instead, I should have borne it more stoically. For a moment I sat mute and bewildered. Going away from me! Returning to the great city, among whose teeming thousands I should perhaps lose her for ever! The thought cut me to the heart like a knife.

"'Oh, do not say that you are going away!' I cried. 'What shall I do?'

"She looked at me with a faint blush deepening upon her cheeks.

"'The season is over,' she replied. 'I have already stayed longer than I intended.'

"'I cannot bear it!' I said impetuously. 'If I cannot see you, be near you always, I do not care to live. Octavia, do you not know that I love you?'

"'You should not talk to me so,' she returned agitatedly. 'You do not mean what you say. We have only known each other two weeks.'

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"'Two weeks or two years,' I cried. 'It is nothing to me. I could not love you more—I shall never love you less.'

"'We are almost strangers,' she answered gently. 'Such sudden love as you profess for me cannot be lasting. It is only a fancy that you will soon forget.'

"'If it should so chance that by giving my life I might save yours, you should know if it were only a fancy, as you call it; or love so deep-rooted in my heart that only death can silence it.'

"'Hush!' she said, giving me her warm, white hand, 'do not speak of dying. Such chances as you speak of do not occur in these commonplace days. Let us talk of it no more. We are friends, are we not?' she added, looking at me with her soft eyes, in which there was a strangely tender expression. 'You shall call upon me in town, and perhaps when you know me better you will be glad that I did not take you at your word.'

"'Yes, let us talk of it no more,' I responded sorrowfully. 'I should have known that there was no hope for me. I am not worthy of such love as yours.'

"I pressed my lips to her hand convulsively, and rushed away.

"The morning of her departure broke dark and stormy. The rain poured down in blinding floods, and the equinoctial gale roared through the great woods and over the roofs of the hotel. I had not the heart to bid her a formal farewell; but after she had entered the carriage to be driven to the station, I took a short cut through the grounds, hoping to catch a last glimpse of her in the train as it passed the bridge.

"Even in this region of tempests such a commotion of the elements had been rarely known before. The valleys were converted into turbid lakes. The great trees groaned and creaked overhead, the air was full of flying branches, and more than once I had to climb over some huge uprooted trunk. When I reached the open space upon the bluff the wind was so violent that I could only keep my feet with a great effort. The river below was now a swollen torrent, choked with fragments of wreck and dashing against the piers of the bridge with a noise like continuous thunder.

"As I crouched behind one of the heavy iron stanchions, I began to be aware of some startling change that was taking place in the great structure before me. I felt a series of shocks vibrating along the trestle, as if a Titan's hammer were beating at its base. As I continued to watch it, the faint tremor grew to a visible rocking motion, and before I could fully comprehend the cause a seam opened between the ironwork and the stone anchorage. Then I understood what was going on. Under the combined power of the wind above and the torrent below, the bridge was giving way. At that moment the bridge tender came leaping along the ties with a face of fear.

"'The bridge, the bridge!' he cried. 'It is going. It will be down in five minutes!'

"Then, with a thrill of horror, I remembered the approaching train, already overdue. Under its weight the bridge would go down like a structure of cards.

"'The train, the train!' I shouted in reply, 'stop the train!'

"He comprehended me, and, seizing his danger signal, ran up the line at the top of his speed. But at the same time I felt the peculiar jar which an advancing train communicates to the rails, followed by the shriek of the escaping steam as the startled engineer reversed his breaks.

"Shall I ever forget the agony of that moment as I saw the engine and its one carriage dash into view round the curve, pouring forth clouds of vapour, like the breath of a labouring giant! On it came, presenting to my terror-stricken eyes the likeness of a living thing struggling against its own destruction. I beheld the driver standing grim and determined, at his throttle valve; I beheld the face of the woman I loved pressed against a window, and the glimmer of her white hand waving an adieu. In a frenzy of despair I endeavoured to spring upon the platform, determined to share her fate, but I missed my grasp, and the huge mass rolled heavily on.

"How the bridge swayed and shook! I saw the top of the carriage sink down— first on one side, and then on the other, recover itself, jolt on a few paces further, and stop directly over the central span, while the engine, which had become detached, shot on and reached the shore in safety as the section it had just left crashed down almost from beneath its tender.

"The carriage remained upon the central span, so close to the verge that one of the wheels hung over the gulf. And now the hinder section, connecting with the bluff upon which I stood, was sinking inch by inch from its anchorage. Bolts, pins, and braces cracked with reports like cannon, until but one twisted and splintered girder supported it. Mad with despair, I sprang down upon it, determined to make my way across it to the carriage, but I was seized by one of the crowd which had quickly gathered upon the scene, and drawn back.

"'What are you doing, sir?' cried a voice. 'You will be dashed to pieces.'

"'What do I care,' I returned, struggling with those who held me. 'In Heaven's name let me go! The woman I love is in that carriage!"

"'Too late, sir. Look!'

"There was a grinding, tearing sound, a roar like near thunder, and a torrent of water upflung even to where we stood. The second section had fallen! The middle span, supported upon the two piers, bearing the carriage, alone remained.

"'That won't stand half an hour.' I heard a voice saying near me. 'Look, there goes a brace. Poor girl —poor girl!"

"I turned upon them fiercely. 'Help me save her, if you are men.'

"'Gladly, sir. But how? Look for yourself. Nothing but a bird could reach that carriage now.'

"I looked and turned pale at the sight. A boiling gulf of water intervened between me and my loved one, and could I have passed it alive, by what means could I have mounted three hundred feet of masonry as smooth as the walls of a house?

"'Oh, Heaven! was she indeed doomed? Must she die so young, by a death so horrible—die under the very eyes of the man who loved her more than his life?

"I believe I was about to end my agony by plunging headlong into the river, when I was restrained by seeing her come out upon the platform and look towards us. For a moment, seemingly resigned to her fate, she made no sign. Then she recognised me, and stretched out her arms appealingly.

"A groan of sympathy went up from the throng of spectators. On my part, I answered her with a wild cry of love and despair.

"Was there no way to save her? Here was the opportunity I had spoken of—of giving up my life for her. Oh, how gladly would I do it, if only there were the ghost of a chance! At that moment my eyes rested upon the three telegraph wires, still suspended between

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the shore and the piers. A hope and a plan flashed through my mind like an inspiration. If only they would bear my weight! I knelt down, and examined their fastenings; they were looped over stout hooks, buried in the solid woodwork. If the opposite attachment proved equally strong I might cross in safety. But I must risk that.

"I rose and spoke to the crowd, who had been watching me pityingly. They thought from my actions that I had gone mad.

"'Friends,' I said calmly, 'I have found a way to reach her; if you will help me I will save her.'

"I pointed to the telegraph wires and explained my plan. There was a universal protesting cry——

"'Madness! Sheer waste of life! Sure death!'

"But I persisted, argued, threatened. I vowed that if they refused to aid me I would try it unaided. Finally one of the men—a mechanic—who had been examining the wires, joined the group.

"'There is a chance, boys. A mighty slim one, I admit, but who of you wouldn't risk his life to save his wife? And as this here girl is the young man's sweetheart, I reckon there ain't much difference, so I vote we give him a hand.'

"His rough eloquence evoked a cheer of approval, and a dozen men hastened to offer their assistance. First I had a message sent to the telegraph operators to cease using the wires for a time. Then I called for rope, and a hoisting apparatus near by was speedily stripped of its three hundred feet of stout cable. I hurriedly constructed a sling—such as house-painters use—with a loop, which I fastened over the wires, the latter being fortunately placed so near together that my weight would be equally distributed over all three. I got into my sling, fastened the end of the rope about my waist, with directions to secure it firmly to the shore and pay it out as I advanced, and amid a breathless silence began my perilous journey.

"As I swung outward over the gulf, for a moment my head swam and my heart throbbed violently. But the sight of my darling crouched upon the platform of the carriage renewed my courage and I went bravely on.

"If the wires should part with my weight, if the fastenings at the other end were defective, if a knot should slip, I should be plunged to instant destruction. I knew it, but the fear had passed away. If I must die, how could death be met more fitly than in the name of love?

"My progress down the slope of the wires was not difficult, for my own weight assisted me. It was on the upward curve, towards the pier, that my real struggle began. Painfully a few inches at a time, with the heavy ropes bearing upon my loins, I drew myself along hand over hand. In the increasing fury of the gale I was dashed to and fro on my slender support, sometimes so fiercely that I was almost head downward over the roaring water beneath.

"At last, panting and exhausted, I reached the buttress of the pier and drew myself upon it. A faint cheer from the shore hailed the success of the first part of my endeavour, but the more perilous portion still remained to be accomplished. I unbound the rope from my waist, and slipping the loop of my sling over it, knotted it firmly to a projecting beam.

"Picking my way over the violently swaying fabric, I reached the carriage where Octavia sat. With a ghastly face and starting eyes she had watched my slow progress, but she smiled with a sad composure as I mounted the platform.

"'You have risked your life for mine,' she said. 'Why have you done it?'

"'For the sake of the love which you called a fancy,' I replied. 'Did I not speak the truth?'

"'Forgive me,' she answered, 'I did not know my own heart. In the face of death I have learned it. If we escape together I am yours—all yours. If not——'

"'We die together,' I interrupted. 'But come, there is no time to lose. The piers are quaking like reeds.'

"I made her enter the carriage, and remove all of her superfluous clothing; then, wrapping her in her waterproof, I lifted her in my arms and bore her to the starting point of our terrific journey.

"I secured myself in the sling, and holding on with one hand, assisted her down with the other. She clasped her arms about my neck, and burying her face in my bosom, left me free to act.

"Our movement over the wet rope, flung about by the force of the wind, was terribly slow. There were moments when I was compelled to pause and hold on for dear life. But I was labouring for that which was infinitely dearer to me than life, and I seemed to possess the strength and courage of a dozen men.

"Once I looked back. Masses of masonry were falling from the pier, and it shook so violently that the rope was jerked as if by a strong hand. For the moment my courage failed me, and my blistered hands slipped from the rope. But I set my teeth and went on.

"We were within a dozen feet from the shore, and a score of hands were already outstretched to grasp us, when there was a frightful tug at the rope, a general cry of horror, and as the remainder of the bridge fell with a hideous crash into the water, I was dashed violently against the bluff.

"I remembered nothing more until I awoke and found myself lying upon the wet grass, bruised and bleeding, with Octavia bending over me.

"'You are safe,' I whispered; 'thank God for that!'

"'Yes,' she answered softly; 'thank God and the devoted love of a noble heart!'

"She kissed me before all the spectators, and I am bound to say that they appeared to regard it as a very justifiable proceeding.

"But little more remains to be told. My wounds were not serious, but they confined me to bed for several weeks. Not long after my recovery I claimed my reward, which was paid me with a very good grace, with due accompaniments of wedding-bells and bridesmaids. As I perceive Mrs. Acton coming to invite us to dinner, you may have an opportunity of asking her if she has ever found reason to regret her bargain."

Silas Mackay.

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THE QUEEN of NIGHT

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BY HEADON HILL,
(Author of "Guilty Gold," "Zambra the Detective," "The Rajah's Second Wife," etc., etc.)

CHAPTER XXII.

KENNARD'S COUP.

NOT for long was I to revel in the luxury of feeling that treacherous fiend's life ebbing under the pressure of my thumbs. McIntyre's rough grasp fell upon my shoulder, while the two attendant seamen flung themselves upon me, and dragged me away. As I was hustled to the companion-stairs, Kennard appeared, coming hurriedly from the saloon.

McIntyre's rough grasp fell upon my shoulder.

"For Heaven's sake speak a word to him, General Waldo," appealed McIntyre, "mayhap it will quiet him. The poor young lady has passed away, and it has clean lifted his senses. He has nearly killed the doctor."

But all the "word" I got from Kennard, as he brushed by us towards the state-room, where Zavertal was picking himself up, was the whisper:

"Don't be a fool; you will spoil everything."

Heaven knows, now that the mad delight of choking Zavertal was denied, there was no need to quiet me. They led me back to the cabin on deck, half dazed with grief, and thrust me in, McIntyre showing by his dejected manner that he sorely repented the rash kindness which had provoked such a scene. He had probably had a taste of his medical officer's quality already, and dreaded the consequences of his having taken me below—too late—for a last word with my dying love.

How long I remained in that stricken state I know not, but as my numbed brain cleared, the brief sentence Kennard had spoken was still ringing in my ears, and to my calmer judgment it began to present vague possibilities of hope. True, I was in the position of one who clutches at straws, but there the straw was, all the same. "Don't be a fool," he had said; "you will spoil everything."

Despite his calling Kennard was a kindly and sympathetic man, and these were hardly the words he would have used to one so bitterly bereaved if he had known that Aline was dead. It would indeed have been the height of selfish egotism to describe his eagerly-desired detection of the criminals as "everything," when their crime had robbed him whom he was addressing of more than all. Again, if he had known that she was dead surely the time would have come for accusation and denouncement, but in place of that he seemed as keen on preserving secrecy as ever.

On the other hand, to discount my vague hope there was the fact that he could not possibly know that she was *not* dead. He was coming from the saloon dinner-table, whence his watchfulness must have prompted him to follow Zavertal on the latter's being summoned to his patient; and he could not therefore be sure that some laxity on Mrs. Brinkworth's part had not yielded an opening to the enemy in the interval since he last held communication with her. Then, too, there was the Doctor's pronouncement that the death was unmistakable, and Mrs. Brinkworth's frantic grief.

So as soon as the clouds had lifted they began to lower again, and I longed eagerly for the coming of Kennard, who alone could solve the mystery. Looking at my watch I found that it was close on eleven o'clock, and I wondered

Immediately behind McIntyre came four sturdy sailors carrying a coffin.

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that he had not been before. He must have known my need of him, and yet here was the time when the passengers retired to their berths at hand, and he had given no sign. From the sailors who had me in charge I could gather nothing, for they obstinately refused to speak.

It must have been half an hour after the hush on deck had told that the passengers had retired for the night, that the door was gently opened, and Kennard stole into the cabin. I had not been trusted with a lamp, lest in my supposed madness I should set fire to the ship, but a ray from the electric arc outside, falling on his face, showed that even his stedfast nerves were strung to the highest tension. He came close, and drawing me to the light, read the agony I had been enduring in my sunken cheeks and heavy-lidded eyes.

"Bah! and is it as bad as that?" he murmured. "Why, man, you never give a fellow credit for anything. So you really thought—eh?"

"And it is not so?" I cried, almost beside myself with the reaction that I felt was coming.

"You ought to have known that I could not be more explicit then," he replied. "I should not have spoken roughly to you if you had had real cause for grief. I could not get to you before because for us to be in communication might have given the whole thing away; but if I could have foreseen that good-hearted idiot, McIntyre's, move, I should have found means to warn you somehow. As it was, I had taken careful steps to prevent your being troubled with bad news till I had told you the programme. Zavertal and Vizard are closeted together in the latter's cabin below, but it is well to preserve caution to the end. Listen," and he whispered in my ear half-a-dozen short, crisp sentences, that nearly sent me mad with joy.

"It is to be performed outside here at midnight—an arrangement prompted by gratuitous malice, for the purpose of harrowing you, and snatching a paltry revenge," he concluded. "And now I must be off to see that there is no hitch. Vizard, of course, will have no reason to be present, but he is nearly sure to make an excuse for being on deck at the time, if only for the pleasure of gloating over you. I am ready for him either way."

He left the cabin as quietly as he had entered, and looking at my watch I saw that it wanted ten minutes of midnight. Half the time had elapsed when I heard a whispered conclave outside. Directly it ceased one of my guards put his head in at the door and said:

"Begging your pardon, sir, for the mistake that's been made, and for our part in it, but it is Mr. McIntyre's orders that the door is unlocked and you free to leave when it suits. Meantime me and my mate is to remain—seemingly on guard."

"Right you are, my man," I replied; "least said soonest mended. I'll stay here for the present."

He went out, closing but not locking the door, and I stationed myself so as to command a view of the deck through the window. The night was dead calm, and there was no motion on the ship except the vibration of the engines. At last the silence was broken by the clanging of eight bells for midnight. Hardly had the last stroke died away when the sound of footsteps coming from aft reached me, and peering closer yet I saw McIntyre walking slowly at the head of a little procession, which halted and ranged up at the ship's side opposite my cabin.

There was no doubt about the nature of the ceremony that was to be performed. Immediately behind McIntyre, who led by virtue of his position as acting captain, came four sturdy sailors carrying a coffin that for obvious reasons was evidently heavily weighted. In its rear followed Zavertal and Mrs. Brinkworth, while after a little interval Vizard strolled up, as if attracted to the scene by chance, and took up a position whence he could see my window as well as the business in hand.

At a motion from McIntyre the sailors put the coffin down close to the side, and drawing back a little appeared to wait respectfully for McIntyre to commence reading the service. The two men who had been guarding my door also lounged forward a little, the effect of the grouping, which was carried out in the most natural manner, being that both Zavertal and Vizard, though standing apart, had each three or four seamen in their immediate vicinity.

"Seize that man!" I cried to the sailors behind him.

In the ordinary course everything would have been ready for commencement, but McIntyre hesitated, turning over the leaves of his prayer-book as though he had a difficulty in finding his place. This is not at all an unusual occurrence with a captain called on to read the burial service, but McIntyre was shooting glances in the direction of the companion-stairs. They escaped the notice of the mourners, whose heads were decorously bent; but I, watching every move, saw them quite plainly, and burned with feverish anticipation.

At last a quick flash passed over the Scotsman's face, and he dropped his book with a bang on the coffin-lid. Knowing what was to happen at that signal, I gazed from Vizard to Zavertal and back again, not to lose a fraction of the vengeance which they had thought to wreak on me, but which, after all these tortuous windings, was now to be turned against themselves. The coffin lid was raised with a jerk, and out sprang young Lord Darranmore, his face aglow with excitement and boyish impudence.

"You've got the wrong one, Doctor, and not dead either," he piped in his shrill boyish treble, pointing at Zavertal, while the sailors edged up closer. "So nice of you to change the turns, and give a poor boy a chance. You had better have stuck to the programme, and *settled Darranmore on the run from Italy to Alexandria*, eh?" And he kept on vociferating till I stepped quietly out of the cabin, when even his exuberance yielded to the coming climax.

At the first sight of the little Earl, Zavertal's broad face had broken out into beads of perspiration; and Vizard, scowling defiance at me, now muttered a startled oath heard by all. The suddenness of the grim jest sprung upon them had, as was intended, caused them to "give themselves away" in the presence of witnesses, but their cup was not yet full. As I advanced to join the group on one side, from the other came the sound of Kennard's natural voice, and all eyes turned that way to see the American detective,

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stripped of all disguise, coming from the companion-house with Aline on his arm. At the sight Zavertal folded his arms and groaned as one who admits that hope is gone.

At the same moment McIntyre touched his cap to me and said: "You are in charge again, sir. Thank God my part is done."

I merely nodded, for I was watching Vizard narrowly, guessing that he was made of sterner stuff than his fellow-criminal, and now a furtive motion of his hands caused me to act promptly.

"Seize that man," I cried to the sailors behind him, and so well drilled had they been by Kennard and McIntyre in the part they had to play, that six brawny arms were round the villain before he could get to his pistol. Simultaneously the other sailors took possession of Zavertal's portly form, and the capture was complete.

At a gesture from Kennard Mrs. Brinkworth joined Aline, and together the two ladies left the deck—glad enough, as they told me afterwards, to be released from the glare of Vizard's burning eye. He made no attempt to struggle with his captors or to utter speech, but his silence, aided by that snake-like glitter, was more terrible than words.

"So," said Kennard, coming in front of him, "my European trip has led to business. I had heard of the Red Heart and Black Arrow—as who of the inner circle of my trade has not?—but I never thought that a six months' holiday was to lead to the breaking of the gang and the arrest of its chief. I have to thank the taint of an old scent left by your friend Zavertal there for the lucky chance. You made a false step, Mr. Vizard—to call you by your last known name—when you allied yourself with a gentleman of such notorious record."

Stabbed Vizard again and again.

It will be remembered that Vizard had never seen Kennard in his own character, and he had excellent reasons for not suspecting his identity. The stranger's taunt stung him into curiosity. "Who is this fellow?" he ground out between his clenched teeth, shooting a furious glance at his trembling colleague.

"It is Kennard; you must have made a mistake," the wretch replied.

"Then I have met my match; we are fairly beaten," was Vizard's comment, murmured in tones that had changed to the quiet chagrin of a beaten man; and when at the same moment I signed to the seamen to take the prisoners to the place that had been prepared for them, he gave no trouble.

I shall always believe that this sudden submission was only a ruse of his subtle brain working towards some fresh scheme for revenge, liberty, or both; but if so he was moved by a short-lived hope. The procession had taken only about half-a-dozen steps when the wild figure of a man, barefoot, and with nothing on but trousers and shirt, rushed from some lair where he had lain concealed, and stabbed Vizard again and again, all helpless as he was in the grasp of his guards. Kennard, McIntyre, and I sprang forward and seized the assailant, to find that he was Dicey—the skipper of the *Miranda*—relapsed into raving delirium.

We handed him over to the men of the watch who crowded round, as quiet as a lamb now that his purpose was gained, and exulting that he had "got square" on the man who had tempted him with fair promises, then shot him, and afterwards abandoned him in the doomed vessel.

"Any one of the wounds would have been fatal," pronounced Kennard, rising from an examination of the great criminal's dead body. "Believe me, I am not spiteful when I express the wish that that miserable tool of his could have permitted me the luxury of seeing him hanged."

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Anchor Down.

After Zavertal had been safely stowed under lock and key, a council of war was held between Kennard, McIntyre, and myself, and resulted in a decision to run for Naples and report all the circumstances at the Consulate.

It was necessary that the authorities at home should be apprised of what had happened, so that they might be beforehand with any rumours that might enable Nathan to escape; while it was also imperative that the position of Sir Simon Crawshay and others, as clients of the Murder Syndicate, should receive the early attention of Scotland Yard. We were also moved by the consideration that Vizard must have had accomplices of greater or lesser degree at Naples—Mr. Matthew Mayfield, for instance—whom it would be highly desirable to secure.

The conference lasted far into the night; but late, or rather early in the morning, as it was when it ended, I found Aline up and waiting for me in the saloon, whither Mrs. Brinkworth had taken her. I must ask permission to draw a veil over our meeting. We had been parted a few days only, but into them had been crowded the events of a lifetime, and both of us had stood, during that brief separation, on the threshold of the Great Beyond. What people have to say to each other, under these conditions, concerns themselves alone.

The explanation of my dear girl's apparent death had already been furnished to me by Kennard. Having found unmistakable traces of poison in the medicine supplied to her by Zavertal, he was struck with the idea of springing such a surprise on them that they would be bound to incriminate themselves. In selecting his rather gruesome method he was moved by the fact that he was dealing with gruesome men, and that nothing short of the resuscitation of their supposed victim would attain that end. As an afterthought, however, he modified the plan by substituting Darranmore for Aline as the occupant of the coffin, and the boy, needless to say, entered into it heart and soul.

The great difficulty in his way was to manage so that Aline should simulate death without being detected by Zavertal, and here my dear girl herself came to his aid by proposing to take an anæsthetic drug which he had with him. All that remained was to prevent Zavertal from closely examining the "body," and to bestow her, unseen, in a place of safety during the interval between her "death" and "funeral."

This was cleverly contrived, first by Mrs. Brinkworth's skilful acting at which I happened to be present, and secondly by McIntyre, who was taken into confidence after my return to confinement, giving facilities for smuggling Aline into another cabin. There she remained till it was time for her to appear at her own burial and complete the climax. Darranmore was introduced into Aline's cabin, half-a-dozen trustworthy sailors were told off as bearers, with instructions how to act, and the mine was laid which ended in the breaking of the gang.

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In the morning there was no keeping the tragedy of the night from being known throughout the ship. To prevent false reports getting about I assembled the passengers in the saloon, and at my request Kennard briefly explained what had occurred. The announcement caused a widespread horror, which quickly developed into a general determination to leave the *Queen of Night* at Naples and return home overland rather than continue the voyage on a vessel with such terrible associations. As usual, the panic was strongest among those who never could have had any cause for alarm, and indeed it was afterward proved by documentary evidence found at Nathan's office that Orlebar, Lord Darranmore, and Aline were the only passengers on this trip who had sailed under the "special" arrangement which was the mainstay of this lucrative but fiendish enterprise.

When it was decided to turn the ship's head for Naples we were about fifteen hours' steam from that port, and it was therefore far advanced in the afternoon when we reached the bay. Kennard was very anxious that there should be no communication with the shore till he had laid the case before the Consul and enabled the latter to cable to the home authorities, and accordingly at the detective's request I signalled an urgent request for the British representative to come aboard. On his arrival it was arranged that the steamer should be taken home by McIntyre, and that Zavertal should go in her in close custody. Kennard and I were to escort Mrs. Brinkworth and Aline home overland.

After noting all particulars, the Consul left to cable to Scotland Yard, and to see to the arrest of Signor Volpe—a proceeding in which I was especially interested, as it was surmised that if the Italian police were smart enough the haul would include Mr. "Matthew Mayfield." I may say here that the hope that that mealy-mouthed scoundrel would be captured was doomed to disappointment, for the office was found empty and the bird flown.

It was conjectured that he had scented danger on seeing the unexpected arrival of the *Queen of Night* and the signal

The detective had been eagerly purchasing papers at the bookstall.

for the Consul. It transpired that with the exception of the Italian clerk, this person formed the whole establishment of a mythical Volpe, posing as a manager under the name of Tucker, Mayfield being a pseudonym put on for his dealings with me. How far he was acquainted with the methods of his principals was never known, but it is beyond doubt that he aided Vizard willingly, and with his eyes open, to entrap me on to the *Miranda*, for an object that he must have known was a nefarious one.

The antecedents of the man Dicey were found to be pretty much what might have been expected. He had been discharged for misconduct from an English yacht, and was loafing about the quays of Naples, ripe for any villainy, when Vizard found in him a ready tool to navigate the rattle-trap old steamer which he purchased, first to be the scene of my murder and then as a means of rejoining the *Queen of Night*. We can dismiss him from these pages once for all. He was landed from the ship, and taken to the International hospital, where he died a week later from the effect of the wound received in the cabin of the *Miranda*.

Sir Simon shot himself.

It was at Amiens, as we were speeding northwards across France, that the first news reached us through the English papers, of the effect of the Consul's cabled information to Scotland Yard. The train was full of the *Queen of Night's* late passengers, but we four—Aline and Mrs. Brinkworth, Kennard and I—had secured a *coupé* to ourselves. The detective had been eagerly purchasing papers at the bookstall, and when he returned to his seat, deep in the perusal of a heavily-leaded paragraph, it was plain that he had found what he wanted. He read quietly to the end, and then said:

"That man Mayfield has euchred the Consul and got his own cable in first. At any rate, Nathan got wind of the exposure and bolted. He is safe in custody, though—by means of a smartish capture as he was leaving for Holland."

He hesitated a little, then looked across at Aline and added: "I suppose you have no lingering feeling for your guardian, Miss Challenor?"

"I never had any to linger," said Aline simply. "There could not be any pretence of affection between us, for he always treated me as if I was an encumbrance. My father had no near relatives, and but few friends, and only appointed him because he had the next place to ours in the country and had a knowledge of our estates."

"Well, then, there will be no harm in telling you the news," said Kennard. "Sir Simon shot himself yesterday morning on learning through the papers of Nathan's arrest. It is rumoured also that the Honourable Ralph Darran, the next heir to the Darranmore title, who sent our lively young Earl on this trip, is missing. I should not be surprised to hear that there are other gaps in English society later—due to Zavertal's operations on previous voyages. There have been three such, I understand, this year since the ship has been under its recent owners."

His words were prophetic, for in several families of more or less note there were mysterious disappearances during the next few days, and it did not fail to be remarked that most, if not all, of the withdrawals were of recently enriched inheritors who had lost relatives on the *Queen of Night*.

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So secretly had the system been worked that there was no proof which would have justified pursuit and arrest, the documents found at Vizard's palatial mansion in Park Lane being written in a cypher which defied discovery. Enormous sums were found entered in a private ledger in a safe hidden in the wall of an octagon room where he transacted business, but there was no vestige of readable matter showing on what account they had been received. They, however, tallied with sums appearing in the banking account of Nathan and Co., and were undoubtedly the various amounts of blood-money received by the "firm."

On reaching London we took Aline to the firm of solicitors who had acted for her late father, and they at once made arrangements that she should remain with Mrs. Brinkworth till she should attain her majority, and thus avoid the necessity of having to return to Sir Simon's house, where his sister was now in possession. Orlebar's ill-used wife forgot her troubles in serving us, and is to this day our devoted and faithful friend. She was doubly avenged, inasmuch as the wicked woman who had supplanted her in her wretched husband's affections, and had then sent him to his doom, herself met with a terrible end a year later in a revolution in the Argentine, whither her fears of discovery had taken her.

With the exception of the conviction and hanging of Nathan, which followed in due course, the last act in this eventful drama occurred a week after our return. We were sitting—Kennard and I—late one evening in the hotel where we had taken up our abode, and the detective was telling me a few facts about the gang whose symbol was the "Red Heart and Black Arrow."

"Vizard was the sole irresponsible chief," he said, "but Nathan, and, of late, Zavertal, were partners on an equal footing so far as knowledge was concerned. The subordinate helpers in all parts of the world, while thoroughly unscrupulous, probably had no guilty knowledge beyond their own humble parts. I heard of the organisation years ago, when they confined their talents to big bond-forgeries and gigantic long-firm frauds. I imagine it was Zavertal's reputation as a successful poisoner that inspired Vizard with the idea of enlisting him and starting a yacht-owning murder syndicate."

"If you had not chanced to sail with us, the thing might have gone on indefinitely," I replied. "An unscrupulous ship's doctor has wholesale facilities for murder, without fear of inquiry. It was a tremendous scheme, but the basis of it was really very simple and easy."

"The schemes of great criminals are generally like that," said Kennard, and—"Come in," he added, as someone knocked at our door.

It was McIntyre who entered, looking so haggard and dishevelled that we were not surprised at the news he brought. The *Queen of Night* had been burned at sea, off Ushant, and Zavertal with her.

"The lass that loved a sailor."

"His was the only life lost," proceeded McIntyre, when we had made him comfortable. "We kept him for safety in one of the steward's pantries, on the lower deck, and when the fire broke out and it became necessary to quit the ship, I went below with a man to fetch him. On unlocking the door from the outside it refused to open, and I then remembered that there was a bolt on the inside as well. This he had shot, and nothing I could shout through the door would induce him to draw it. The fire had gained such ground that we should have lost our lives if we had stayed to break down the door. It was practically a case of suicide."

"A fitting end for the ship and the man," was Kennard's only comment.

* * * * * *

And now as this has been a story of incident, I must not "lag superfluous" before my readers, with no more incidents to offer them. My wife's arguments prevailed, and I have abandoned the sea. But though I have become a landsman, I am not wholly an idler—with the care of her vast estates to employ me. It is two years since that stormy cruise ushered in for Aline and me a time of peaceful calm that knows no cloud, and shows no sign of breaking; and writing here in our quiet Herefordshire home, with miles and miles of apple-blossom outside my window, the cell in the Convent of Santa Lucia, the cuddy of the *Miranda*, and the deck-cabin next the surgery on the *Queen of Night*, seem far away indeed. Yet that they were once very present realities two things remain always to remind me—the letters of my friend Kennard, well and prosperous in the States, and the sweet voice that is even now bidding me lay down my pen—the voice of "the lass that loved a sailor."

THE END.

The "Queen of Night" had been burned at sea.

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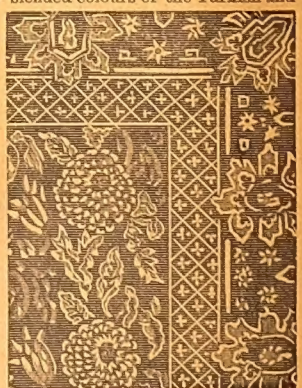
REVERSIBLE CARPETS (Regd.)

Reversible, woven throughout with handsome border to correspond; richly blended in several colours to suit any furniture. Made in 10 sizes only. These carpets are the production of much care, labour, and forethought, and are made in handsome and elaborate patterns (which are protected by registration). They combine the rich blended colours of the Turkish and Persian with the elegant designs of the Wilton. These goods cannot be distinguished from real Brussels when laid down, and cannot be excelled in durability.

Size.	Reduced Sale Price. Each.
6ft. by 9ft.	5/6
7½ft. by 9ft.	7/6
9ft. by 9ft.	8/6
9ft. by 10½ft.	9/6
9ft. by 12ft.	11/6
10½ft. by 12ft.	13/6
12ft. by 12ft.	15/6
12ft. by 13½ft.	17/6
12ft. by 15ft.	19/6
12ft. by 18ft.	24/0

When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.



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Blairquhan, Maybole, N.B., August 3rd, 1894.—Lady Hunter Blair writes: "Will Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son send her another 'Prudential' Carpet, same as before, crimson and gold, dimensions 9ft. by 10½ft. Cheque inclosed."

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F. HODGSON & SON, MANUFACTURERS, IMPORTERS, AND MERCHANTS, **WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS.**

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